

ELECTRIC CHOICE
A Public Service Advisory
from **The Churchill Area Environmental Council**
2300 Wm. Penn Highway, Pittsburgh, PA 15235 Spring, 2000

A new state law gives consumers the opportunity to choose the company that **generates and transmits the electricity** powering their homes (the Electric Generation Supplier or EGS). It is important to note that there will be NO choice about the **delivery of that electric power**. The use of local power lines, transformers, substations, and other equipment used to bring electricity into your home from high-voltage transmission lines would still be charged to you by Duquesne Light Company (your electric distribution company or EDC) and regulated by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC). So **the choice you have is limited** to only part of your electric service (the production part) and is further limited only to companies that are licensed by the PUC.***



No doubt you have received mailings from many such licensed companies seeking to supply the electric power you use. Some offer cheaper rates; others offer electricity generated from "clean," renewable* sources (the **Green-e Program**). In addition, Duquesne Light has furnished each customer with a "price to compare" letter which shows your individual, monthly electricity usage in kilowatt hours (kWh) and its current price of 4.75 cents/kWh. (0.25/ cents/kWh for transmission and 4.50 cents/kWh for generation). If you use an average of 500 kWh per month you pay Duquesne Light \$23.75. For an average monthly use of 1000 kWh you pay \$47.50, etc. For energy that is guaranteed to be generated from 50% renewable* sources Green Mountain.com would cost \$29.45/500kWh/month. Cooperatives have formed to use group purchasing power to get lowest possible rates for members. At least one of these claims to be willing to supply electricity from renewable* sources for members requesting it.

Remember: you will **also** pay Duquesne Light to have the electricity delivered to your home (regardless of who produces and transmits it). **Caveats:** some companies may have switching fees, long term sign-up agreements, peak-usage add-ons, monthly service charges, cancellation penalties etc. There may also be "transition charges" to recover a company's stranded costs (e.g. Duquesne's nuclear power investment losses). Be informed! **Use the toll free numbers or websites below to get and compare company electric rates and any ancillary charges.** The pocket-book savings may not be great, especially if you are a modest user, but the opportunity to select an environmentally friendly supplier may be appealing to some consumers. **Below are listed sources of reliable information**** we have been able to gather to help residents in our area decide about electric choice. Also listed are the PUC "Licensed Competitive Suppliers"*** for our area whose rates you should compare. Send for anything you need; it is all free of charge. Then **make your choice as an informed consumer**. If you take no action at all you will continue as a Duquesne Light Company customer for both generation (production and high-voltage transmission) and delivery of your electricity. Since Duquesne Light is selling off the generation end of its business, you will be getting electricity produced by another company (selected by Duquesne Light!) anyway.

***Renewable Energy**

Electric choice offers consumers the opportunity to purchase energy from renewable sources. Energy produced from sources such as the wind, sun, and hot steam or water from deep beneath the Earth's surface (geothermal) is considered renewable because the supply does not diminish as it is used. Renewable energy sources cause relatively few environmental impacts and pose a low risk to human health. Traditional sources of electricity, produced by the burning of fossil fuels, not only create air pollution and other environmental damage, but the supplies of fossil fuels are diminishing over time.

Electricity can be produced from several types of renewable resources. The wind can be harnessed to create electricity by using turbines or windmills. Power generated from wind sources does not create pollution. Wind is economical in locations where the average wind speed is at least 14 miles per hour. Another source of energy comes from the sun's radiation. The sun can be used directly to produce electricity in two ways: solar thermal and photovoltaic (PV) systems. Solar thermal systems use the sun's energy to heat a fluid that produces steam, which then turns a turbine and generator. PV panels, commonly called solar cells or modules, use semiconductor material to convert sunlight directly into electricity. Geothermal plants generate electricity by using the hot steam or water from deep beneath the Earth's surface. These plants emit very little air pollution and have relatively low impact on the environment. Hydro-electric plants can also supply renewable, clean power, but the dams required to store water at the required elevated levels create environmental problems of their own.



Green-e logo
certified
at least 50% renewable

Some people may believe that by choosing a renewable energy supplier (e.g. Green Mountain) for their household electricity they will receive their power exclusively from renewable sources. That is not exactly the way it works. You cannot specify which electrons flow into your home. It helps to think of your local electricity grid as a river that has many sources of water flowing into it. Many different electricity generators add their energy to the "river" and then it flows into individual homes and businesses. When you choose to purchase renewable energy you increase the amount of those resources in the power pool. So decisions to purchase electricity from renewable sources change the overall mix of electricity and encourage more investment in renewables. This will help the environment and should eventually lower the price of renewable energy.

**** Sources of Reliable Information on Electric Choice**

PA Office of Consumer Advocate's Shopping Guide, August 1999

(for Duquesne Light residential electric customers)

Pa. Office of Consumer Advocate

555 Walnut Street 5th Floor, Forum Place

Harrisburg, PA 17101-1923

(717) 783-5048

email: paocca@pjd.net

Pennsylvania Electric Choice Program

(helpful tips, answers, and complete list of suppliers)

www.electricchoice.com

(this site is updated frequently and should be checked regularly)

Pennsylvania Campaign for Clean Affordable Energy

(an advocacy group for environmentally "clean" energy)

1740 Main Street, Lisburn

Mechanicsburg PA 17055

(717) 697-2111 email: Jan_Jarrett@msn.com

www.paenergycampaign.org

Citizen Power, Inc.

(a Pittsburgh-based public policy research and advocacy organization)

P.O.Box 81766

Pittsburgh PA 15217

(412) 421-6072

www.visitweb.com/citizenpower

"POWERLINE" newsletter quarterly

***** PUC Licensed Competitive Residential Electric Suppliers (as of Dec., 1999)**

ACN Energy, Inc. (877) 226-3649

www.acnenergy.com

7926 Jones Branch Drive, Suite 500

McLean VA 22102

Advanced Energy (888) 697-6891

www.advancenergy.com

P.O. Box 429 Manheim PA 17545

Allegheny Energy (888) 232-4642

www.alleghenyenergysupply.com

Roseytown Road, RR 12, Box 1000 Greensburg PA 15601

Duquesne Light (888) 756-0887

www.dqe.com

P.O. Box 535380 Pittsburgh PA 15253

DTE Edison America, Inc. (800) 290-2371

www.dtesavings.com

101 N. Main Street, Suite 300 Ann Arbor MI 48104

Electricity Choice.com (888) 997-3700

www.electricitychoice.com

1 North Shore Center, Suite 220 Pittsburgh PA 15212 (independent cooperative)

Energy Cooperative Association of Pennsylvania (ECAP) (412) 421-5006

www.libertynet.org/ecap 2121 Murray Avenue Pittsburgh PA 15217 (a non-profit

cooperative using group purchasing power to negotiate price)

First Energy Services (888) 254-9227

www.firstenergyservices.com

P.O. Box 1425 New Castle PA 16103

Green Mountain (888) 246-6730

www.greenmountain.com

P.O. Box 2206 South Burlington VT 05407

Penn Power Energy (800) 964-6568

www.pennpowerenergy.com

P.O. Box 1425 New Castle PA 16103

Peoples Plus (800) 869-5880

www.peoplesplus.com

P.O. Box 298 Pittsburgh PA 15230

Power Choice (888) 285-9153

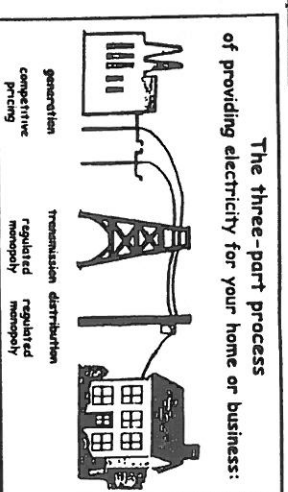
www.pepco-services.com

P.O. Box 90281 Allentown Pa 18109

Utility.com (800) UTILITY

www.utility.com

828 San Pablo Avenue Albany CA 94706



The Churchill Area Environmental Council consists of up to three interested volunteers from each of the following municipalities: Chalfant, Churchill, Forest Hills, and Wilkins. They are officially appointed to advise these local governments and residents on matters of environmental importance.