



## Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

# CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

### Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

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# ELECTRIC BILL MADE EASY



Learning to read an electric bill is an important part of being an educated consumer of electricity. The bill is required to include several pieces of information to help consumers know how much electricity they have used and how much it will cost them. The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) developed this fact sheet to help consumers better understand their electric bill.

## Usage and meter reading

### Electric usage

The amount of electricity consumers use each month is measured in kilowatt hours (kWh).

### Types of meter readings

The electric company may read the meter or provide an estimate of the electricity used each billing cycle, typically a month. An actual meter reading shows the exact amount of electricity you have used during that billing cycle.

An estimated reading is determined by looking at the usage for the same month during past years. Consumers can request an actual meter read if their bill has been estimated for more than two consecutive months or if they suspect the meter is malfunctioning.

First test is free. Subsequent tests within 36 months can cost money if the results show the meter is functioning properly (consumers are entitled to two free meter readings per year).

Consumers also may be able to call in their meter reading to the electric company themselves. Contact your utility first to verify. For more information on how to read an electric meter, pick up the OCC's fact sheet entitled "How to Read an Electric Meter."

## Fees and charges

There are four charges that appear on bills and they are added together to determine what you owe. These charges are:

- ▶ **Customer Charge** – A fixed fee established to pay for the costs associated with electric equipment and maintenance;
- ▶ **Distribution Service Charge** – A kilowatt-hour based volumetric charge for delivering electricity to your home, including use of local wires and other equipment to move electricity;
- ▶ **Generation Service Charge** – A kilowatt-hour based volumetric charge for the production of electricity; and

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The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at [www.occ.ohio.gov](http://www.occ.ohio.gov).



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- ▶ **Transmission Service Charge** – A kilowatt-hour based volumetric charge for moving high-voltage electricity from power plants to the electric company.

### Required items on bills

Electric companies are required to list certain information on your bill. Each company must include:

- ▶ Customer's name, address (service and billing) and account number;
- ▶ Payments or credits on your account;
- ▶ List of each service and related charges. A utility may include more details but is required to list the customer, delivery charge, generation charges rate per kilowatt hour;
- ▶ Price-to-compare. The price-to-compare is the price the electric utility charges for generation and transmission for customers who remain on the Standard Service Offer (SSO). In order to save money, a supplier must offer you a rate lower than the price-to-compare;
- ▶ The name of any energy marketer that you may be using;
- ▶ Billing information, including a beginning and ending meter reading date;
- ▶ Whether your usage has been determined by an actual or estimated meter reading;
- ▶ The 12-month usage history for the account;
- ▶ Explanation of codes and abbreviations on the bill;
- ▶ How to contact the electric company;
- ▶ The start and ending date of the billing cycle;
- ▶ Amount billed for the current period and due date; and
- ▶ Unpaid amount due and late payment fees.

### Why read your bill?

Consumers should read their bill each month to know what charges appear on the bill and their normal electric usage. If there is any charges that are out of the ordinary, consumers are more likely to notice. Also, the company may place important notices and other updates on the bill. Customers with a supplier may see additional charges as part of the same or on a separate bill.

### Examples of electric bills

Examples of your electric bill can be found online through your current electric utility. Follow the links below to find more information about the bills:

#### American Electric Power (AEP):

<https://www.aepohio.com/global/utilities/lib/docs/BillSamples/BillSampleOH.pdf>

#### Duke Energy Ohio:

<https://www.duke-energy.com/home/billing/reading-your-bill>

#### Dayton Power & Light (DP&L):

<http://www.dpandl.com/customer-service/account-center/understand-your-bill/>

#### FirstEnergy

[https://www.firstenergycorp.com/customer\\_choice/ohio/understanding\\_yourbill.html](https://www.firstenergycorp.com/customer_choice/ohio/understanding_yourbill.html)