

Information on Low-Income Programs for Electric Customers in ERCOT

Low-Income Discount: The System Benefit Fund (SBF) was enacted as part of the Texas Electric Choice Act in 1999. It is intended to provide assistance to low-income customers through reduced electric rates (LITE-UP Texas), weatherization programs and administrative funding. The low-income discount is known to customers as LITE-UP Texas, and provides discounts to eligible customers off their electric bills issued in May, June, July, August and September 2009.

Customers can self-enroll in LITE-UP Texas by calling toll-free 1-866-454-8387 and requesting an application. Customers may also print an application at <http://www.puc.state.tx.us/ocp/assist/liteup/index.cfm>.

An electric customer is qualified if the customer is currently receiving Medicaid or food stamps. A customer may also qualify for the program if the customer's household income is at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. The discount is currently set at about 3¢/kWh, which equates to a 20-30% discount based on declining electric rates over the past year, depending on the customer's base rate. The discount will increase to about 3.3¢/kWh on August 1, 2009. (The actual rate differs slightly by service territory.)

Summer Disconnection Rules: In competitive areas of the state—located within the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) region—a retail electric provider may not authorize disconnection of a customer's electricity for nonpayment in any county for which the National Weather Service (NWS) has issued a Heat Advisory, or when an advisory has been issued on any one of the preceding two days.

Disconnection Rules for Ill Customers: Electric providers may not disconnect service for non-payment when a customer establishes that disconnection of service will cause a person residing at that residence to become ill or more seriously ill.

Electric Providers Working With Customers

Retail electric providers (REPs) located within the ERCOT competitive market provide additional, voluntary programs to assist low-income customers. Examples of programs include:

- Since May 2003, the Neighbor-to-Neighbor program has helped tens-of-thousands of **Direct Energy**, CPL Retail Energy, and WTU Retail Energy customers with their home energy expenses. The program was created to assist families experiencing financial emergencies with up to \$600 in bill payment assistance during a calendar year. The program is administered by more than 30 community action agencies across the state.
- The Care to Share Fund provides bill payment assistance to eligible **First Choice Power** residential customers in need of emergency funding. Customers can donate to the Care to Share Fund and assist residential customers who need a little extra help by providing extra emergency assistance through the Care to Share Fund.

Legislative advertising paid for by:

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- The CARE Energy Assistance Program was created by **Reliant Energy** to help Reliant customers during a difficult time. Customers who qualify may receive this one-time annual assistance through non-profit social service agencies in communities that are served by Reliant Energy. These agencies review customer cases and qualify them based upon the agency's designated hardship criteria. This summer, from July 1 through Sept. 30, 2009, residential critical-care customers, low-income seniors and other low-income customers who call Reliant Energy and agree to a payment plan will not be disconnected. Reliant Energy is also offering free home energy audits for qualified low-income and elderly residential customers in Houston, and, for the fourth year in a row, Reliant is operating Beat the Heat Centers at various locations across Houston.
- **TXU Energy** has committed \$25 million per year through 2012 to fund a 10% low-income discount, and an additional \$5 million per year through 2012 for low-income bill assistance through its TXU Energy Aid program. In addition, TXU Energy has established the Low Income Advisory Committee and works collaboratively with over 800 agencies across the state to assist customers in need. Plus, for the third consecutive year TXU Energy has voluntarily declared a summer disconnection moratorium and provided more flexible deferred payment plans for TXU Energy customers designated as low-income, ill or disabled or who are at least 62 years of age. Customers must contact TXU Energy to take advantage of these programs.
- Since September 2006, several REPs have participated in the low-income credit program resulting from CenterPoint Energy's 2006 rate case settlement. This program is currently providing a credit of \$3.90 per month to eligible customers through August 31, 2009.

Customers requiring assistance should contact their REP to see what other programs are available, or for assistance related to bill payment during the summer months.