



Office of the Public Advocate
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Shopping for **ELECTRICITY?**



Look inside to find out what YOU need to know.

A notice from the State of Maine, Office of the Public Advocate

Shopping for Electricity?

YOU MAY HAVE SEEN OFFERS THAT PROMISE to lower your electricity bill by buying power from a different provider. Customers of Central Maine Power and Emera Maine can get their electricity generation supply from either the standard offer or a competitive electricity provider (CEPs). While some consumers have saved money by signing up with a CEP, others have seen their electricity bills unexpectedly increase. The Office of the Public Advocate recommends that residential customers take care when considering signing up with a CEP, and make sure they know the following before entering into a contract:

✓ THE STANDARD OFFER PRICE

Taking electricity service from a CEP will only save money if its price is lower than the Standard Offer price. You can find this price on the website of the Maine Public Utilities Commission at www.maine.gov/mpuc. For residential and small commercial customers the Standard Offer price changes on March 1st of every year, with changes typically announced a month or more in advance.

✓ THE PRICE OFFERED BY A CEP

This is the price you'll compare to the standard offer. Unless you use a lot of electricity every month, your savings are likely to be small. **For most residential customers, a difference of one cent per kWh will save about \$5 per month.**

✓ WHETHER THE PRICE IS FIXED OR VARIABLE

A variable price contract may offer savings now, but can spike without warning to two or three times the standard offer rate in future months. **We recommend customers avoid variable rate contracts altogether.**

For the latest information on competitive electricity providers, including a comparison of rates, visit our website, www.maine.gov/meopa. To sign up for our mailing list or for more assistance, contact us at **(207) 287-2445**, or via email at opa@maine.gov

✓ THE TERM OF THE CONTRACT, AND WHAT HAPPENS WHEN IT ENDS

If the price is fixed, find out for how long, so you know if the term will last beyond the next standard offer price change. Some providers offer fixed price contracts that automatically re-enroll customers at a variable rate when the initial term expires.

We recommend customers avoid these teaser contracts: a single month on a variable rate can easily wipe out any savings under the previous fixed rate.

✓ IF THERE IS A TERMINATION FEE

Some CEPs with fixed term offerings will seek an early termination fee if you move back to standard offer or to another CEP before the fixed term expires. **Make sure you know this fee before signing up.**

✓ YOUR RIGHTS

CEPs are subject to some oversight by the Public Utilities Commission, which has rules to protect consumers. For example, CEPs must give you their Terms of Service before enrolling you, and you may opt out of any agreement within five days of signing up. CEPs must verify your choice to accept their service, and must tell you in advance of any renewal, or any switch to a variable term at the end of your contract.

