

Beware of misleading marketing

Alternative energy suppliers may contact you through door-to-door solicitations, tele-marketing, direct mailings and at kiosks in public places. Unfortunately, many of these companies use deceptive marketing. You can avoid being misled by doing the following:

- If someone asks to see your utility bill, say no and ask them to leave materials for you to review later on your own time.
- Never give or show your utility account number to anyone unless you fully understand what you are signing up for.
- Be wary of alternative energy suppliers that claim to save you money – their prices are usually higher than traditional utility prices.
- If an alternative energy supplier offers a price that seems lower than your utility, it could be an introductory rate that increases later and don't forget about hidden fees.
- No alternative energy supplier is affiliated with or endorsed by your utility or the state.
- Free gift cards or other incentives may not offset higher prices.



For more information about alternative suppliers, call the Attorney General's Consumer Fraud Bureau:

Chicago
1-800-386-5438
TTY: 1-800-964-3013

Springfield
1-800-243-0618
TTY: 877-844-5461

Carbondale
1-800-243-0607
TTY: 877-675-9339

Spanish Language Toll-Free Hotline:
1-866-310-8398

You can also submit a complaint online:
www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov

If you are having trouble paying your home utility bills, you may be able to secure a payment plan through your utility or receive assistance dollars through the state Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). For more information, contact the Illinois Commerce Commission's toll-free customer service line at:

1-800-521-0795
TTY: 1-800-858-9277

ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SUPPLIERS: HIGHER PRICES WITH QUESTIONABLE BENEFITS

Avoid Deceptive Practices and
Higher Prices by Sticking with
your Public Utility



Between June 2014 and May 2018, customers in Illinois overpaid alternative electricity suppliers by over \$600 million.

Alternative suppliers are for-profit companies that sell electricity and natural gas to consumers. They offer the exact same electricity or natural gas that your traditional public utility provides, but alternative suppliers usually charge higher prices that fluctuate without warning and with higher fees.

Regardless of what salespeople for alternative energy suppliers tell you, keep these things in mind:

- **You are not required to enroll with an alternative energy supplier. If you take no action, your default supplier will be your utility, whose rates are regulated by a state agency or a supplier chosen by your local government.**
- Alternative energy suppliers are not part of the utility, or approved by the utility.
- Alternative energy suppliers are not part of a government-approved savings program and they do not have to offer you a good price or save you money.
- Charges from an alternative energy supplier do appear on your utility bill.
- Compared to utilities, alternative energy suppliers can, and usually do, charge higher prices and more fees.

Do not sign up with an alternative energy supplier unless you understand that you will almost certainly be charged higher prices and more fees than you would with your traditional public utility.

If you are enrolled with an alternative energy supplier, you may be paying more for your electricity or natural gas than you would be paying to your utility for the exact same service. Alternative energy suppliers typically offer low introductory prices that appear to be lower than the utility price but increase substantially after a few months.

Municipal Aggregation

Your town may have negotiated one rate with an alternative electricity supplier for all of its residents. That rate may or may not be cheaper than the public utility rate. Don't be misled by alternative electricity suppliers claiming they are part of a municipal aggregation program when in fact they are not. Check PlugInIllinois.org for a list of all electricity municipal aggregation communities.

If you want to cancel, here's how:

- **Check your utility bill.** If you are enrolled with an alternative energy supplier, the name of the supplier will appear under the supply portion of your utility bill, which may be located on the back or a later page of your bill.
- **Find out how much you are paying.** A price, in cents per kilowatt hour, and any additional fees will be listed on the supply portion of your bill.
- **Check the public utility price.** You can find utility prices at:
 - * Electricity Prices: <http://pluginillinois.org/fixedrate.aspx>
 - * Natural Gas Prices: <https://www.icc.illinois.gov/ags/products.aspx>
- **Consider canceling and switching back to the public utility.** You can cancel service with an alternative energy supplier by contacting the company. If you cancel within 10 days after enrollment, your contract will be terminated without any charges. Some contracts may charge a cancellation fee of up to \$50. If you cancel within 10 days after receiving your first bill, you will have to pay for the energy you used but you cannot be charged a termination fee. If you were enrolled with the alternative energy supplier without your knowledge, ask the company to waive the cancellation fee and provide a refund or call the Attorney General's Office.