

Public Utility Commission of Texas

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News Release
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PUC Urges Proton Customers to Shop Provider of Last Resort rates can be significantly higher

The Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) urges customers of Proton Energy Inc. (Proton) to shop for a new provider as the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) begins the process to switch Proton customers to a Provider of Last Resort (POLR). The PUC revoked Proton's license after Proton failed to comply with a settlement agreement to transfer ownership of the company due to significant violations of PUC rules.

ERCOT is beginning the switching process for approximately 642 customers on the afternoon of Thursday, Aug. 21, and expects to finish the process by Tuesday, Aug. 26, although ERCOT may finish the process sooner. Customers being switched should receive a notice from ERCOT, Proton and their new POLR. Any customer who receives notice that they are on a POLR rate should read the notice immediately and carefully, then contact that Retail Electric Provider (REP) or shop for other REPs to enroll in another plan. A REP that provides POLR service can offer customers rates that are more attractive than the POLR rates. Low-income customers served by POLR providers are entitled to the same benefits as such customers receive from all other REPs.

Even before receiving a notice, POLR customers can access www.powertochoose.org or call toll-free 1-866-PWR-4-TEX (1-866-797-4839) for a list of providers and their rate offers. Proton customers can also ask the REP providing their POLR service for other available plans.

It is important that POLR customers understand the need to find a lower-cost offer as soon as possible. POLR rates can be significantly higher than current competitive electricity rates. Deployment of advanced metering throughout the state has enabled customers to switch very quickly to new providers, and REPs have the ability to further expedite a switch from POLR if the customer agrees to waive notification requirements.

POLR service is designed as a temporary safety net assuring customers of continuous electric service if a REP leaves the market and customer accounts are not sold or transferred to a competitor. POLR service is relatively high-priced due to planning costs and uncertainty at a given time in the number of customers and electricity load.

The PUC requires that REPs return any unused portion of a deposit to a switched customer within seven calendar days after a meter read. The PUC has seized funds from letters of credit provided by Proton to ensure that customers receive any amounts owed to them and Proton complies with its obligations. A POLR can require a deposit, but not for initial POLR service.

Proton customers can also call the PUC's Customer Protection Hotline at 1-888-782-8477 for assistance.

All PUC News Releases are available at www.puc.state.tx.us