

Florida Public Service Commission

consumer E-Newsletter

November 15, 2005

CHAIRMAN



**BRAULIO
BAEZ**

Most consumers have a clear idea of what electric reliability means: When they flip a switch and the lights go on, the service is reliable.

Absolute reliability is an elusive goal in a state with more than 130,000 miles of transmission and distribution lines serving over six million customers.

To learn more about the Florida Public Service Commission's accountability standards for reliability for the state's five investor-owned electric utilities, read Chairman Baez' Consumer Bulletin:

[How Electric Reliability is Measured](#)

ABOUT THAT FUEL CHARGE ON YOUR ELECTRIC BILL

During recent months, you have undoubtedly noticed an increase in the prices of various fuels that are used to meet daily energy needs. From the gasoline that powers our cars to the natural gas that is used to heat homes, fuel prices are on the rise. With this in mind, the Florida Public Service Commission (PSC) urges Florida's consumers to conserve energy, and to take time to understand how the PSC monitors the fuel price increases that occur in the marketplace.

The cost of the fuel (coal, natural gas, etc.) used to generate electricity is the single largest expense a utility incurs. Take a look at your electric bill. You will note an item known as a "fuel charge" which represents a large portion of your electric bill.

The fuel charge limits a utility to dollar-for-dollar recovery of cost-effective, prudent fuel expenditures. Changes to the fuel charge do not directly increase or decrease a utility's profit.

Generally speaking, the PSC authorizes each investor-owned electric utility to recover through the Fuel Clause those costs that may be volatile or beyond the utility's control, as long as the utility demonstrates that its expenditures are prudent and cost effective. The PSC will disallow an expenditure when the record reflects that a utility acted imprudently based on information that was or should have been available to the management prior to the occurrence of a given act or event.

The PSC began holding public hearings on the annual fuel cost adjustments in 1974. Prior to that time, fuel adjustment charges were implemented without benefit of public hearings.

The PSC has established the fuel costs that will be applied to customers' electric bills in 2006. You can view the filings and schedule of events by clicking on this link: [Docket No. 050001-EI](#).

What Does The Public Service Commission Do?

The Florida Public Service Commission sets the rates utility companies charge for natural gas and electricity, and oversees telephone service in Florida. In 36 counties, the PSC sets the price you pay for water if your water company is privately owned.

Need Discounted Phone Service?



Learn More About
Lifeline Assistance
& Link-Up Florida

Utility Problems? File An Online Complaint



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Questions?
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LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP)

The *Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program* provides grants to local governments and non-profit agencies to assist eligible low-income households in meeting the costs of home heating and cooling. The majority of the funds are used for utility payment assistance.

The program can assist customers in paying their home energy expenses. Three categories of assistance exist and they include:

- home energy assistance,
- crisis assistance, and
- weather related or supply shortage emergency assistance.

Each category has unique requirements.

To be eligible for the program, household income may not exceed 150% of the [poverty guidelines](#) and [allowable and unallowable sources of income](#). If the household's income is greater than this amount, the household may still be eligible because some types of income are not counted. The household must provide proof, such as a utility bill, showing that they are responsible for all or part of the energy costs for the household. Please call your [local energy assistance agency](#) to verify that funds are available, what documents will be needed, and when and where they are accepting applications. Typically, applicants will need the following:

- Copy or original of energy bill.
- For applicant only - Copy of identification (ID, voter registration card, driver's license.)
- Copies of proof of income for every member of the household. Proof can be the following:
 - Letter from employer or consecutive pay stubs showing gross income for at least the last thirty days or an income tax return.
 - Award letter or letter from an individual or agency from which income is received.
 - Social Security Administration, Supplemental Security Income, Veterans Affairs, Pension, Welfare
 - Child Support/Alimony
 - Friends or Relatives
 - Any other income source
 - Proof that you are receiving assistance from:
 - Food Stamps
 - Weatherization Assistance Program

- Community Services Block Grant Program
- In the absence of proof of income, program administrators may allow an applicant to sign a self-declaration form on a case-by- case basis. This may be used ONLY when an applicant has no proof.

Source: Florida Department of Community Affairs
<http://www.floridacommunitydevelopment.org/index.cfm>

How To Read Your Electric Meter



Are you surprised each month when you open your electric bill?

Take control of your electric bill by keeping track of when and how your household uses electricity. The Florida Public Service Commission has a publication to help you track your usage and save money on your electric bill:

How to Read Your Electric Meter

There's nothing mysterious about reading an electric meter - in fact, it's easy. Just follow the instructions and track your electricity usage on the Electricity Conservation Scoreboard. Once you know where the electricity is being used, you can take action to manage your electricity consumption.