Know Your Options

Check your utility bill. Are you purchasing natural gas or electricity **supply** from your utility company or an alternative supplier? **Delivery** will always be from your utility company.

Find out how much you are paying.

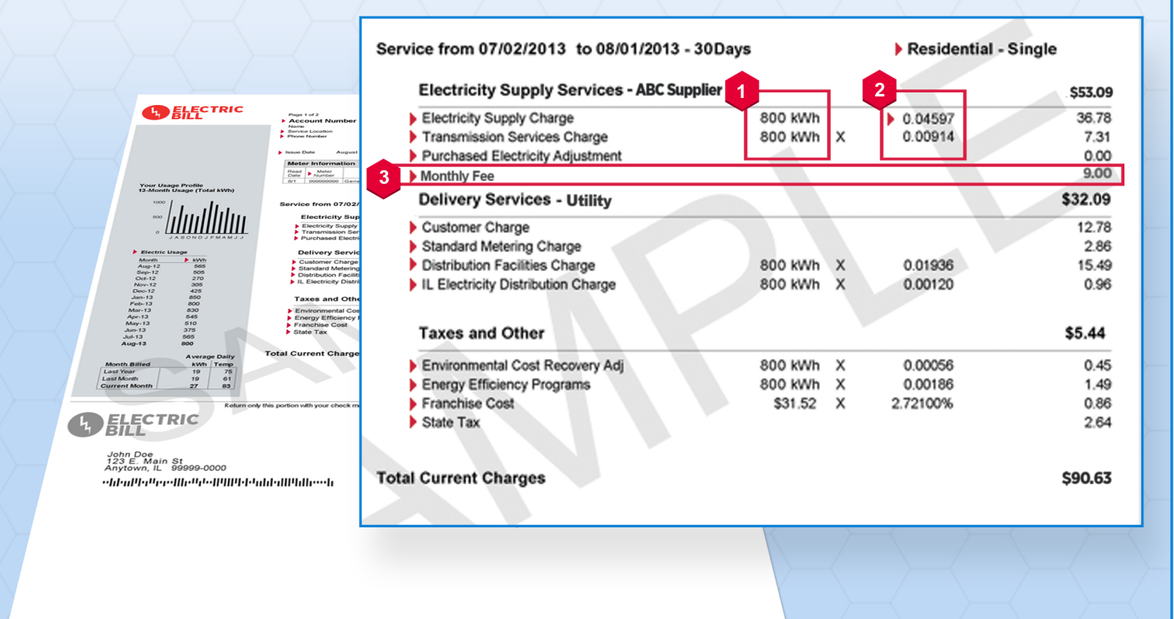
1. How much electricity do you use?
2. How much is the rate for supply?
3. Is there a monthly fee?

Compare your rate. You can find utility and alternative supplier prices at:

- Electricity Prices: http://www.pluginillinois.org/fixedrate.aspx
- Natural Gas Prices: http://www.icc.illinois.gov/ags/products.aspx

Find out what type of rate you have. If you are purchasing supply from an alternative supplier, check your contract to see what type of rate you are paying: introductory, variable, or fixed.

Do you need to make a change? If the utility is cheaper, consider switching back to the utility company. You may be charged a fee up to a maximum of $50 for cancelling with the alternative supplier, but it may save you money in the long run.



Service from 07/02/2013 to 08/01/2013 - 30Days — Residential - Single

Electricity Supply Services - ABC Supplier (1, 2)				**$53.09**
Electricity Supply Charge	800 kWh		0.04597	36.78
Transmission Services Charge	800 kWh	X	0.00914	7.31
Purchased Electricity Adjustment				0.00
(3) Monthly Fee				9.00
Delivery Services - Utility				**$32.09**
Customer Charge				12.78
Standard Metering Charge				2.86
Distribution Facilities Charge	800 kWh	X	0.01936	15.49
IL Electricity Distribution Charge	800 kWh	X	0.00120	0.96
Taxes and Other				**$5.44**
Environmental Cost Recovery Adj	800 kWh	X	0.00056	0.45
Energy Efficiency Programs	800 kWh	X	0.00186	1.49
Franchise Cost	$31.52	X	2.72100%	0.86
State Tax				2.64
Total Current Charges				**$90.63**

Beware of Misleading Marketing

- Hide your account number if someone asks to see your previous bill.
- Remember—a marketer must ask for written authorization to access your meter usage.
- Request all marketing offers in writing and consider the offer for a few days before enrolling, especially if someone comes to your door.
- Consider asking if your utility offers "budget billing" for consumers who want to spread their costs evenly throughout the year. But remember—these plans can still result in unexpected costs at the end of the year.
- If you are interested in an alternative pricing plan (such as variable rates), read all of the fine print, and make sure that the offer is not just an introductory rate.
- Be wary of any offer that guarantees savings. Always compare the price being offered to the utility price.
- Ask about any monthly fees or additional charges.
- Remember—electric utilities must offer real-time pricing plans that charge different rates every hour based on demand. This may be the best way to save money if you are able to lower your electricity use during certain times of the day.
- Be aware—no alternative supplier is affiliated with or endorsed by your utility or the government. If you sign up for service with an alternative supplier, you are entering into a new contract with that company.

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This material is available in alternate format upon request.

Choosing a Natural Gas or Electricity Supplier

Comparison shopping can save you money, but you must do your homework!

LISA MADIGAN
ILLINOIS ATTORNEY GENERAL

Frequently Asked Questions

What do alternative suppliers do?
Traditionally, utilities purchased natural gas and electricity on behalf of their customers and also delivered it to their homes. Today, alternative suppliers can purchase energy on behalf of their customers and have the utilities deliver it. In other words, utilities always deliver energy to consumers' homes, but consumers can choose whether the utility or an alternative supplier provides the energy that they purchase.

Do I have to switch to an alternative supplier?
No. The choice is yours. You do not have to do anything to continue purchasing supply from your utility.

Why would I switch to an alternative supplier?
Alternative suppliers may offer programs such as renewable energy or unique pricing plans that are not available from the utility. However, there is no guarantee that you will save money by switching to an alternative supplier. Carefully review all the terms of any offer and compare them to utility prices before switching. To find out how much utilities and alternative suppliers are charging, you can visit:

- Natural Gas Prices
  - www.icc.illinois.gov/ags/
- Electricity Prices
  - www.pluginIllinois.org/fixedrate.aspx

Some towns may use municipal aggregation, which means that your local government has negotiated one rate for all residents. You can still opt out of municipal aggregation and choose the utility or another alternative supplier instead.

Will switching cost me more money?
Some alternative suppliers cost more than the utility and some cost less. Utilities charge consumers the same price that the utility paid for the supply—they cannot charge more. Alternative suppliers are allowed to charge higher prices and additional fees.

What types of plans are available?
You will be charged for supply based on how much you use. Electricity is measured in kilowatt hours (kWh) and natural gas is measured in therms. You may have options for pricing plans:

- A **fixed price** plan charges a flat rate during a certain period of time.
- A **variable price plan** charges a different rate each month based on market conditions.
- An **introductory price** charges one special rate for a certain period of time and then typically increases.

It's important to note:

- If you are considering a variable price plan, remember that the rate may go up or down.
- If you are considering a fixed price plan, remember that your rate is locked even if the market price goes up or down.

When comparing rates, remember to factor in any additional monthly fees charged by a supplier.

What happens after I switch?
If you switch suppliers, the utility will continue to deliver energy to your home and handle billing and maintenance issues. You will still receive a bill from your utility for the cost of delivery. That bill may also contain charges from the alternative supplier for supply, or the supplier may send you a separate bill.

What if I sign up with an alternative supplier but change my mind?
Illinois law gives consumers 10 days to cancel a contract with an alternative supplier. There is no termination fee for cancelling before this date. After 10 days, you may be charged a termination fee up to a maximum of $50.

Where can I find more information about the options available to me?
For current rates available to customers of the natural gas utilities and various alternative natural gas suppliers, visit http://www.icc.illinois.gov/ags/consumereducation.aspx.

For current rates available to customers of the electricity utilities and various alternative electricity suppliers, visit http://www.pluginillinois.org/offers.aspx.

Where can I report problems with an alternative supplier?
You can file a complaint with the Illinois Attorney General's Office online at www.IllinoisAttorneyGeneral.gov or by phone at 1-800-386-5438, or with the Illinois Commerce Commission online at www.icc.illinois.gov/-consumer/complaint/ or by phone at 1-800-524-0795.

Cost Comparison Worksheet

Use this worksheet to compare offers from your utility and alternative suppliers. You can also compare offers at PlugInIllinois.org and ICC.illinois.gov/consumer.

Questions to Ask the Supplier	Your Current Supplier (may be your utility or an alternative supplier)	Your Utility Supply Price to Compare	Alternative Supplier Price to Compare
Current Supply Price to Compare			
Introductory Price			
Supplier Fixed or Variable Price			
Plus Supplier Monthly Fees, if any			
Total Monthly Cost			
Supplier Early Termination Fees?			

Other things to consider:

- How long is the contract term?
- Will the contract automatically renew?
- Will the alternative supplier send a separate bill, or will the supply charges be included in the utility bill?