

How to shop for cheaper electricity in Granite State

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With some of the state's utilities dramatically increasing their rates in August, ratepayers are free to shop for cheaper energy elsewhere. But most people aren't taking advantage of that option.

The state's largest utility, Eversource, is one of the utilities whose rates will double, causing bills for a typical household to increase by 53 percent (since other parts of the bill will remain the same). But around 85 percent of Eversource's customers buy electricity straight from the utility instead of seeking out cheaper alternatives, according to Consumer Advocate Don Kreis.

"One thing every customer should consider doing is looking at what prices competitive suppliers are offering and seeing if they can get a better deal that way," Kreis said.

In New Hampshire, no one is required to buy electricity from their utility. Instead, you can purchase electricity from competitive third-party providers that may offer cheaper rates than the utilities.

For instance, a Bulletin reader recently switched to a competitive supplier charging 12.7 cents per kilowatt hour for a 30-month contract. At least for now, that's nearly 10 cents less than Eversource's new 22-cent rate, which means the reader would save \$60 per month starting in August.

Here's how to shop for cheaper electricity and switch providers.

- 1) Review the [list of competitive energy suppliers](#) on the Public Utilities Commission website and compare the offers that are available. Various providers may have different prices or contract lengths, or offer renewable energy options.
- 2) Carefully consider the rates and terms of the contract. Note that oftentimes these contracts lock in a rate for a long period of time, such as the 30-month contract the Bulletin reader found. Utilities change their rates every 6 months, so there is a risk that you could end up paying more than their standard rate if it goes down in the future.
- 3) Be sure that you understand the terms of the contract by asking the provider questions about the contract. You need to know how much they will charge per kilowatt hour of electricity, whether the price is fixed or variable, and whether there are additional charges or recurring fees. The PUC includes a [list of questions](#) to ask the provider so you can make an informed decision.
- 4) Once you decide which provider you want to use, you can sign up to purchase energy from them either online or by phone. The provider will inform your utility of the switch.
- 5) Your billing may change. Some providers bill jointly with the utility, in which case you would still receive one monthly bill. Others bill separately, in which case you would receive one bill from your utility for delivering the electricity, and another bill for the energy you used each month from the new provider.

You can read more about switching to a competitive supplier on the [PUC's website](#).