

PUC Continues to Educate Consumers About Available Resources & Utility Assistance Programs During COVID-19 Pandemic & Recovery

HARRISBURG – Utilizing the latest technology and coordinating with front-line community partners, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC) continues to educate utility customers about their rights and responsibilities, assistance programs, and available resources – during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as during the recovery period that will follow.

“In these uncertain times, the Commission is keenly aware that many people are struggling to keep their utility bills manageable and current and are seeking guidance and help,” said PUC Chairman Gladys Brown Dutrieuille. “From the beginning of this crisis our Commission has taken steps to safeguard consumers and to reach out through our community partnerships and social media channels. The PUC remains ‘here for you’ – and we are committed to using all available methods to get valuable information into the hands of the utility customers during these extreme and trying times.”

Reach the PUC by Phone or Online

To schedule a virtual presentation or for more information, email the PUC’s consumer-education team at PA-PC-CMU_ConsumerEd@pa.gov. For updates on utility-related actions related to the COVID-19 Pandemic, visit the [PUC website](#) or follow the Commission on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Educational Topics, Resources and Presentations

The PUC consumer-educator team consistently partners with various statewide community groups, state government agencies, legislators, human service providers, utility companies, community based organizations and many other partners to help educate, spread awareness and share many useful programs, tools and resources throughout this COVID-19 crisis. Among the educational topics, programs, presentations and resources available virtually and/or teleconferencing are the following:

- What does the PUC Regulate?;
- Utility Customer Assistance Programs (CAPs);
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Crisis Resources;
- Hardship Fund Programs and Resources;
- The Lifeline Program for Telephone and Broadband Internet Service;
- Human Service Programs and Resources;
- COVID-19 Recovery Programs and Resources;
- Energy and Water Conservation Tips;
- Utility Safety Tips;
- Consumer Rights and Responsibilities; and
- Shopping with Competitive Energy Suppliers – including presentations on the PUC’s nationally recognized websites www.PAPowerSwitch.com and www.PAGasSwitch.com.

Utility Customer Assistance Programs

Under PUC regulation, every major electric and natural gas utility overseen by the Commission offers CAPs, under which qualifying low-income customers pay discounted bills. Qualification in CAP programs is based on household size and gross household income.

Utilities also have other options to help consumers, including:

- **“Budget billing”** which takes a customer’s annual utility costs and averages it out over 12 months so that bills don’t jump up or down from month to month;
- **“Payment plans”** to help address past-due bills or delinquent balances; and
- Various **“Hardship Funds”** supported by utilities and donations from utility customers along with non-profit and charitable organizations operating in the Commonwealth.

Energy Conservation Saves Money

The PUC also encourages families to explore energy conservation to help manage bills – especially as more people are working remotely. The PUC has interactive information and tips for saving energy on its energy shopping websites – PAPowerSwitch.com and PAGasSwitch.com – to help identify ways to save on energy usage.

About the PUC

The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission balances the needs of consumers and utilities; ensures safe and reliable utility service at reasonable rates; protects the public interest; educates consumers to make independent and informed utility choices; furthers economic development; and fosters new technologies and competitive markets in an environmentally sound manner.

For recent news releases and video of select Commission proceedings or more information about the PUC, visit our website at www.puc.pa.gov. Follow the PUC on Twitter – @PA_PUC for all things utility. “Like” Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission on Facebook for easy access to information on utility issues.