



Public Utility Commission of Texas

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PUC WINDING DOWN ELECTRICITY RELIEF PROGRAM

After multiple extensions, benefits to end September 30, 2020

Austin, TX – In today’s open meeting of the Public Utility Commission of Texas, commissioners approved a timeline for winding down the state’s Electricity Relief Program, which, since its creation in late March, has been providing protection from disconnection for non-payment to Texans in the direst financial circumstances.

“This has been an unusually tough time for our state, and I am proud of our team for managing the details of a program that has protected so many Texans during a difficult time,” said Chairman DeAnn Walker. “I hope we never encounter a similar challenge in the future.”

Originally created by commission order on March 26, 2020, the ERP has been helping unemployed customers of Retail Electric Providers (REPs) by providing protection from disconnections for non-payment. Counting Texans in the program due to their inclusion on the state’s low-income list (due to participation in SNAP or MEDICAID), the ERP program is currently protecting nearly 595,000 households from disconnection for non-payment. In addition, over \$30 million of bill payment assistance has been provided, using funds from a rider charge applied to the bills of electricity customers across ERCOT.

Under the approved orders, transmission and distribution utilities (TDUs) will continue collecting the \$0.33/megawatt hour rider charge until the collection of rider revenues equals to the ERP expenses.

The commission’s orders laid out the following timeline for the program’s completion:

- **August 31, 2020** – last day for self-enrollment referencing unemployment benefits
- **October 1, 2020** - disconnections for nonpayment may resume for Program enrollees to whom notice has been provided at least ten, but no more than 30, days in advance.
- **January 15, 2021** - final Program report due from each REP and TDU.

“As our economy shows signs of rebounding and social services increasingly fill the gaps, it’s time to close this chapter and move forward.” said Commissioner Arthur D’Andrea. “The entities under our purview worked hard to follow our guidance for the duration of the ERP and I’m confident the competitive energy marketplace will continue benefiting Texans.”

“It is appropriate to ensure the benefits last until after the hottest months of summer when energy bills can be at their highest,” said Commissioner Shelly Botkin. “I am proud to have been a part of such an innovative approach to helping our fellow Texans in the toughest circumstances.”

For more information about the PUC’s response to the coronavirus pandemic, Texans are encouraged to visit the agency’s resource page at <http://www.puc.texas.gov/covid-19/>. Texas electricity customers in the areas of the state open to retail competition who have filed or will file for unemployment with the Texas Workforce Commission can request enrollment in the program at <http://TXCOVID19ERP.org> or call 866-454-8387 until August 31, 2020.

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About the Public Utility Commission

Our mission is to serve Texans by regulating the state’s electric, telecommunication, and water and sewer utilities, implementing respective legislation, and offering customer assistance in resolving consumer complaints. Since its founding in 1975, the Commission has a long and proud history of service to Texas, protecting customers, fostering competition, and promoting high quality infrastructure. To learn more, please visit <http://www.puc.texas.gov>.