

Being Offered Lower Gas Prices?

Tips for Careful Consumers

Natural Gas Service: No Longer a Monopoly

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) allows all residential customers to sign up for natural gas service directly from a non-utility gas supplier. Depending on whether you are a customer of PG&E, SoCalGas or SDG&E, you can sign up to buy your gas from one of 20–30 alternative gas suppliers, or continue to receive it from your regulated utility company.

All residential gas bills are divided into a fuel charge and a delivery charge. Non-utility gas suppliers are making phone calls and going door-to-door offering to reduce monthly gas bills by charging less for the fuel portion of your bill. However, even if you sign up to purchase your fuel at a discounted rate from an alternative gas supplier, you still will be paying your utility company the same charge as everyone else to deliver the fuel, maintain pipelines, and respond to natural gas leaks.



Reasons to Sign Up

- You want monthly savings. You believe that your monthly gas bill will go down as a result of paying less for the fuel portion of your gas bill than you might pay as a utility customer.
- You value price protection. The fixed price for fuel in your contract will protect you from potential increases in the wholesale price of natural gas that are passed along to other utility gas customers.
- You like spreading the wealth. You are a customer who appreciates supporting competitive alternatives to traditional utility gas companies.

Reasons Not to Sign Up

- You worry about disappearing savings. Reductions in your monthly gas bill may disappear after your contract ends because gas prices charged by non-utility suppliers are not regulated by the CPUC.
- You don't want a price lock. The fixed price for fuel in your contract may prevent you from benefiting when reductions in wholesale gas prices are passed along to other utility gas customers.
- You like consumer protections. You prefer a utility gas company regulated by the CPUC to a non-utility gas supplier that is not licensed, approved, or endorsed by the CPUC.



Careful Consumers Ask Questions

If you are considering switching to non-utility gas supplier in order to reduce your monthly gas bill, here are some questions that careful consumers can ask.

- May I see your fact sheets and a copy of the contract in writing?
- How much are the monthly customer charges, in addition to the cost of gas?
- How much do I have to pay as a deposit or sign up fee of any kind?
- What is the price for gas fuel that I am guaranteed and how long is my contract?
- How much is the early termination penalty if I move or end my contract before the end of the term?

Become an Informed Consumer

Visit TURN at www.turn.org or email amontes@turn.org

Additional Tips

- To compare prices, call your utility and ask where you can find their historical monthly gas “procurement” rates, and gas price forecasts for next year.
- If you’re worried about bills going up or down, consider getting a balanced payment plan from your current utility company.
- Don’t forget that if you run into trouble paying your gas bills, you will have two companies to deal with.
- Further information and lists of non-utility gas suppliers in your service territory.
 - PG&E:
<https://www.pge.com/en/myhome/saveenergy/money/energychoice/coregasaggregation/coretransportagents/index.page>
 - SoCalGas:
<https://www.socalgas.com/for-your-business/energy-market-services/gas-suppliers-for-noncore-customers>
 - SDG&E:
<https://www.sdge.com/sites/default/files/documents/175085198/Core-CTA-List-2015-Rev%2004-2016.pdf?nid=903>

What to Do if You Have a Complaint

If you find that you are not getting the deal that you were promised, here are two things to do:

1. Call the company and tell them that you want to cancel the agreement because the salesperson did NOT give you the right information.
2. Insist that they waive the termination fees.
3. Inform them that you are going to file a complaint with the California Public Utilities Commission.

Exercise Your Rights

If you are denied service or assistance, you have the right to file a complaint with the California Public Utilities Commission at:

<https://appsssl.cpuc.ca.gov/cpucapplication/> or call 1-800-355-8876.

However, it is important that you first contact the company to try to resolve any complaints.