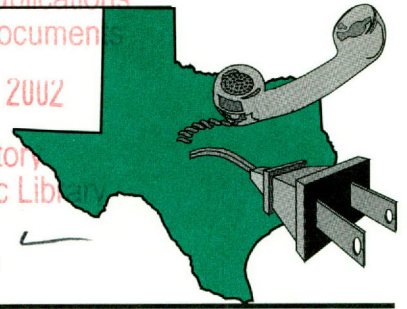


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Volume 5 Issue 2

Public Utility Commission of Texas

Summer 2002

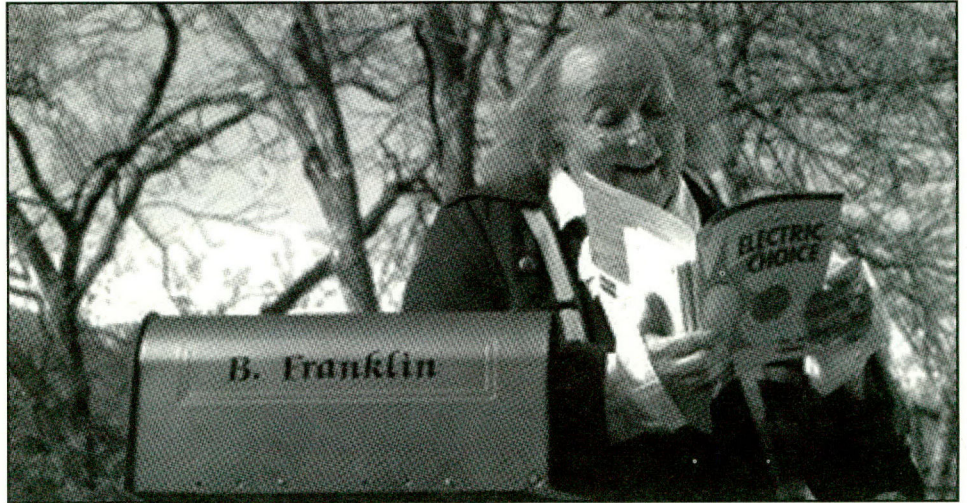
“Old Ben” helps promote Electric Choice

Benjamin Franklin once said, “When you’re finished changing, you’re finished”. With the implementation of a new state law at the beginning of the year, the way many Texans receive their electric service has changed dramatically. These Texans now have the right to choose the company that provides electricity to their home or business.

Naturally, the new process for comparing and choosing an electric provider may be a little confusing – after all, it is a big change from the way things worked in the past.

Electric competition in Texas is not finished, and with competition growing over time, competition for electric service is expected to continue to encourage lower rates and speed the development of new products and services. Competition also is expected to create new jobs, stimulate economic development and help our environment.

Old Ben is also making a change



Ben Franklin will appear in ads this fall to encourage electric customers in open markets to look for their *Power Guide to Electric Choice* in the mail.

himself these days as the spokesman for the Texas Electric Choice Education Campaign in television advertising this fall. The ads are intended to increase the awareness of electric choice in Texas, and to inform electric customers in competitive areas that they will soon receive their *Power Guide to Electric Choice*

in the mail.

The Guide explains in simple language the changes in electric competition, how the market works, and how to choose an electric provider. In addition to the Guide, the Public Utility Commission of Texas also operates an answer center and web-

See Texans, p. 2

Letter from the Commissioners

Competition brings savings for Texans

Dear Customer,

More than halfway into the first year of electric competition, we have solid proof that Texas Electric Choice saves you money. In fact, by the end of year, the 4.7 million residential electric customers living in competitive areas will have saved more than \$700 million dollars compared to last year. That's nearly \$200 for the average customer.

You're saving money whether you've switched or not. The law guarantees a six-percent rate cut from your pre-competition provider. Other savings have come through lower fuel costs. And while fuel costs will increase toward the end of the year, you'll still save money in 2002 compared to 2001. Some customers who have switched to new providers are saving an

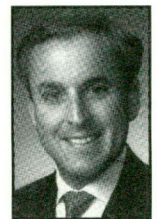
additional 12 percent on top of the basic savings.

But the work is not finished. We continue to face challenges to bring you the best available service and we want to continue to make improvements.

For instance, we've expanded our Customer Protection Division. We're seeing an increase in complaints about the sales practices of retail electric

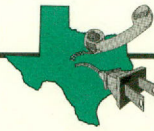


Klein



Perlman

See PUC, p. 3



Texans to get *Power Guide to Electric Choice*

Continued from p. 1

site to assist customers with their options in the new electric market. Electric customers can call 1-866-PWR-4-TEX, or visit www.powertochoose.org for information on electric choice and direction for choosing a retail electric provider.

The *Power Guide* will be mailed to households across the state in two rounds. In the first distribution, the Houston area and the southern half of the state will get the publication the week of Sept. 30. In the second round, Dallas/Fort Worth and the northern half of the state will receive it the week of Oct. 14.

After the mailing of the Guide, Ben will return to television to encourage Texans to keep, read and use their guides and tell them how they can get another copy. Late in September and in early October, look for Ben Franklin during commercial breaks in your favorite shows. Then, watch your mailbox for your *Power Guide to Electric Choice*.

Public Utility Connection

Customer Protection Division
Public Utility Commission of Texas
P.O. Box 13326
Austin, TX 78711-3326

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TTY: 512-936-7136

EMAIL: customer@puc.state.tx.us

QUESTIONS OR COMPLAINTS

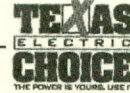
1-888-782-8477

WEB SITE: www.puc.state.tx.us

TEXAS ELECTRIC CHOICE

1-866-PWR-4-TEX (1-866-797-4839)

www.powertochoose.org



Retail Electric Providers

Below is a list of Retail Electric Providers (REPS) that are registered with the Public Utility Commission of Texas to serve residential customers. You can contact these REPs to request an Electricity Facts Label for rate and plan comparison, or you can view an Electricity Facts Label by visiting www.powertochoose.org.

TXU Energy Inc.

Phone: 1-877-460-7066

Fax: 1-877-460-4261

Email: txuenergy@txu.com

Web Site: www.txuenergy.com

Reliant Energy Retail Services

Phone: 1-800-736-3749

Email: service@reliant.com

Web Site: www.reliant.com

CPL Retail Energy

Phone: 1-866-322-5563

Fax: 1-800-666-8867

Eml: customercare@cplretailenergy.com

Web Site: www.cplretailenergy.com

First Choice Power, Inc.

Phone: 1-866-469-2464

Web Site: www.EnergyWithASmile.com

Green Mountain Energy Company

Phone: 1-866-473-3689

Email: thetxfolks@greenmountain.com

Web Site: www.greenmountain.com

Energy America (Centrica plc)

Phone: 1-888-305-3828

Email:

customerservice@energyamerica.com

Web Site: www.energyamerica.com

Entergy Solutions Ltd.

Phone: 1-866-368-3749

Web Site: www.entergysolutions.com

WTU Retail Energy

Phone: 1-866-322-5563

Fax: 1-800-666-8867

Email:

customercare@wturetailenergy.com

Web Site: www.wturetailenergy.com

Utility Choice Electric

Phone: 1-866-839-2782

Email: info@uchoice.com

Web Site: www.uchoice.com

GEXA Energy

Phone: 1-866-961-9399

Houston area: 713-961-9399

Web Site: www.gexaenergy.com

ACN Energy, Inc.

Phone: 1-800-348-6496

Email: info@acnenergy.com

Web Site: www.acnenergy.com

Cirro Corp

Phone: 1-866-692-4776

Email: service@cirrocorp.com

Web Site: www.cirrocorp.com

Please note that available Retail Electric Providers vary per area. You can find out the REPs serving your area by calling 1-866-PWR-4-TEX, or visiting www.powertochoose.org.

Do you have a utility complaint?

To contact the PUC with a complaint or a question:

Call: 1-888-782-8477,
or in Austin 512-936-7120

Fax: 512-936-7003

Write: Public Utility Commission
Customer Protection
P.O. Box 13326
Austin, TX 78711-3326

Web: www.puc.state.tx.us/ocp

Include:

- Your name, address and telephone number
- Utility's name, address and telephone number
- Account number, if any
- Explanation of the facts and the solution you want
- Your bill or any other documentation

Se habla español



CURRENT AVERAGE RETAIL ELECTRIC SERVICE BILL COMPARISON

Average Monthly Bill and Percentage Savings Off Price To Beat- based on annual usage of 1,000 kWh

| Service Area | Retail Electric Provider | 1000 kWh | Savings | Service Area | Retail Electric Provider | 1000 kWh | Savings |
|---|---|--------------|---------|--|---|--------------|---------|
| Texas New Mexico Power | First Choice Power Price To Beat | 91.50 | | Central Power and Light | Mutual Energy CPL Price To Beat | 95.30 | |
| | Reliant Energy | 87.00 | 4.9% | | First Choice Power | 84.00 | 11.9% |
| | TXU Energy Services | 84.00 | 8.2% | | TXU Energy Services | 85.40 | 10.4% |
| | Green Mountain Energy (100% renewable energy) | | | | Green Mountain Energy (100% renewable energy) | | |
| | <i>Month to Month</i> | 94.00 | -2.7% | | <i>Month to Month</i> | 93.00 | 2.4% |
| | <i>Reliable</i> | 97.00 | -6% | | <i>Reliable</i> | 96.00 | -0.7% |
| | Utility Choice Electric | 86.00 | 6% | | Utility Choice Electric | 84.00 | 11.9% |
| Reliant Energy HL&P (CenterPoint Energy) | Reliant Energy Price To Beat | 91.12 | | TXU | TXU Energy Services Price To Beat | 86.70 | |
| | ACN Energy | 90.00 | 1.2% | | ACN Energy | 87.00 | -0.03% |
| | Energy America | | | | Cirro Corp. | 82.60 | 4.7% |
| | <i>36-month term</i> | 89.40 | 1.9% | | Energy America | | |
| | Entergy Solutions | 84.00 | 3% | | <i>36-month term</i> | 84.80 | 2.2% |
| | First Choice Power | 82.00 | 10% | | First Choice Power | 82.00 | 5.4% |
| | Gexa Energy | 80.00 | 12.2% | | Gexa Energy | 80.00 | 7.7% |
| | Green Mountain Energy (100% renewable energy) | | | | Green Mountain Energy (100% renewable energy) | | |
| | <i>Month to Month</i> | 92.00 | 1% | | <i>Month to Month</i> | 87.00 | -0.3% |
| | <i>Reliable</i> | 95.00 | -4.3% | | <i>Reliable</i> | 90.00 | -3.8% |
| | TXU Energy Services | 83.60 | 8.3% | | Reliant Energy | 82.30 | 5.1% |
| | Utility Choice Electric | 83.00 | 8.9% | | Utility Choice Electric | 82.00 | 5.4% |
| West Texas Utilities | Mutual Energy WTU Price To Beat | 97.40 | | watt-hour (kwh). Some REPs charge rates that vary by season or usage level. As a result, the actual average price listed on a customer's bill for any given month and customer may differ from that listed here depending on the usage of the customer and the actual rates charged during that month. Please contact the relevant REP for its current pricing, offers and terms of service or visit www.powertochoose.org . The PUC makes no recommendations with respect to any REP. Although we believe these prices are accurate, the PUC makes no warranty that the prices on this table are currently being offered. Price To Beat rates reflect higher fuel costs as approved by the PUC in August 2002. | | | |
| | First Choice Power | 91.00 | 7% | | | | |
| | TXU Energy Services | 86.20 | 11.5% | | | | |

Letter from the Commissioners

PUC sees progress in implementation of Electric Choice

Continued from p. 1

providers (REPs). Some are merely the result of confusion. But some are legitimate complaints about slamming and cramming. Our experience in dealing with these issues regarding telephone service has allowed us to adjust our manpower to deal with these complaints regarding electric service.

While we're making steady progress, the process can be confusing at times. That's why we've created the Texas Electric Choice education campaign to give you the information you need to make an informed choice about electric providers.

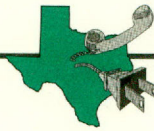
To learn more, call Texas Electric Choice toll-free at 1-866-PWR-4-TEX (1-866-797-4839), or log on to www.powertochoose.org. It's important to get all the information

you need before you decide whether to switch.

To get you started, in the next few months we'll be mailing you a comprehensive booklet called *Your Power Guide to Electric Choice*. This guide explains in simple language how the new market works, what has changed and how to choose a REP. Look for the guide in your mailbox this fall. When you get it, keep it, then use it.

We realize new issues will appear as we move deeper into competition. While some improvements may take longer than others, we intend to keep a steady hand on the process so the benefits of competition are realized by you, the customer.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Klein, Chair
Brett Perlman, Commissioner



Conference helps promote efficiency programs

The Public Utility Commission (PUC) and the state's investor-owned electric transmission and distribution utilities (TDUs) sponsored the Texas Energy Efficiency Conference 2002 at the State Capitol on July 23.

The conference was held to promote programs offering \$66 million in energy efficiency incentives in 2003.

These new programs are designed to help the affected utilities comply with the state's electric industry restructuring law, passed in 1999. In that law, Texas legislators established a goal for statewide energy efficiency equal to 10% of each TDU's growth in peak demand.

"The energy efficiency program is designed to reduce electricity demand in Texas even as the economy and population grow," said PUC Chairman Rebecca Klein. "Reaching this goal helps all Texans by lowering the risk of power shortages, reducing power plant emissions, and lowering utility bills for customers who take advantage of the programs."

The Texas electric restructuring

law requires each TDU to reduce its growth in peak demand by 10%. The PUC-approved programs offer incentives for all classes of electricity customers, including homeowners, apartment owners, and commercial customers.

Participating businesses will also benefit since energy efficiency improvements must be delivered by third-party contractors.

"Success depends greatly on awareness and participation by market players," said Karen Radosevich, Chairperson of the Electric Utility Marketing managers of Texas. "Energy efficiency service providers should view these incentives as an advantage over their competitors, and contractors that don't normally tout high-efficiency products, and should explain the added value of reduced energy costs to their customers."

These programs are designed for all customer classes, including large commercial/industrial, small commercial, residential customers, as well as specific opportunities for low-income residential customers.

Energy Efficiency Programs

Investor-owned distribution utilities will be offering a mix of these new energy efficiency programs in an effort to reach the 10% goal by January 4, 2004. The following approved programs are being offered in 2002 and 2003:

- Commercial and Industrial Standard Offer Program
- Residential and Small Commercial Standard Offer Program
- Hard to Reach Standard Offer Program for low-income customers
- Energy Star® Homes Market Transformation Program
- Residential Energy Star® Windows Market Transformation Program
- Air Conditioning Distributor Market Transformation Program

Fact Sheet Focus

PLTS gives Texans without telephone a second chance

Many Texans who have had their telephone disconnected because they could not pay their phone bill, or who are about to be cut off, have a chance to get back or keep their local phone service. Local telephone companies are required by the Public Utility Commission (PUC) to offer Prepaid Local Telephone Service (PLTS). It is a second chance for many phoneless Texans.

The PUC offers an informative fact sheet on PLTS that explains eligibility requirements, the cost of the program and how to sign up. It also answers some common questions about the program. For example, "Can I still make long distance

calls?" and "Can I use other services like call waiting, while on PLTS?"

This PUC fact sheet provides answers to these PLTS questions and offers other information.

The PUC is committed to giving Texans accurate and complete information on a variety of topics. This and other fact sheets are distributed by the Information and Education section of the PUC's Customer Protection division.

Call us toll free at 1-888-782-8477 to request a packet containing this and all of our available fact sheets or you may find them in the Customer Assistance section of the PUC Web site at www.puc.state.tx.us.

CUSTOMER CONNECTION

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF TEXAS

PLTS

All About Prepaid Local Telephone Service

If you've had your telephone disconnected because you couldn't pay your phone bill, or are about to be cut off, you have a chance to keep your local phone service. The Public Utility Commission requires local telephone companies to offer Prepaid Local Telephone Service (PLTS), a second chance for many phoneless Texans. PLTS is a one-time offer, so you need to be sure you understand and follow the rules.

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR PLTS?

You're eligible if you have an outstanding telephone bill and have had your telephone service disconnected, or if you're about to be disconnected. If you don't follow the rules of the program and you're disconnected from PLTS, you will not be eligible for the service again.

HOW MUCH DOES PLTS COST?

You pay:
 \$2 outstanding debt to your local phone company (a payment plan may be arranged)
 \$2 reconnection charges depending on the length of time you've been disconnected
 \$2 monthly rate for basic service plus a toll blocking charge
 \$2 surcharges and fees like 911, taxes, extended calling services.

HOW DO I GET PLTS?

Ask for it from your phone company. To get PLTS you must:
 \$2 pay up to two months of charges up front
 \$2 get all long distance calls (direct-dial and collect)
 blocked from your phone
 \$2 not ask for additional services like Call Waiting or Caller ID
 \$2 refrain from using automatic dialing services like automatic call return.

ASSISTANCE FROM THE PUC

If you have additional questions regarding pre-paid local telephone service contact the Public Utility Commission of Texas.

WRITE: PUC—Customer Protection, P.O. Box 13526, Austin, TX 78711-3526

CALL: 1-888-782-8477 or in Austin 896-7139 (TTY: 512-895-7136)

FAX: 512-895-7693 EMAIL: customer@puc.state.tx.us

CAN I STILL MAKE LONG DISTANCE CALLS?

You can receive long distance calls, but you will not be able to make direct dial long distance calls or receive collect calls. You can use pre-paid or long distance calling cards, as long as your long distance company bills you separately from your local company. Let anyone who might call you collect know that you CANNOT receive collect calls without being disconnected from this service. You can still dial toll-free.

CAN I USE OTHER SERVICES WHILE ON PLTS?

You'll receive dial tone, 911 access and dial party relay services for the deaf and hearing impaired. You will still have the right to report service problems, and you will get a listing in the phone book. Remember: While on PLTS, you must not use any telephone features that have extra charges, like directory assistance, auto-rewind, or call return. You will be disconnected if you use any features that result in additional charges on your local bill.

WHAT ABOUT MY OUTSTANDING BILL?

You can receive PLTS without paying the long distance charges you owe, but the long distance company can still collect the debt from you and charge you interest. Once you pay all of the long distance charges, you can return to regular telephone service.





Type of complaint determines action toward resolution

Ever wonder what happens to a utility complaint after it is received by the Public Utility Commission (PUC)?

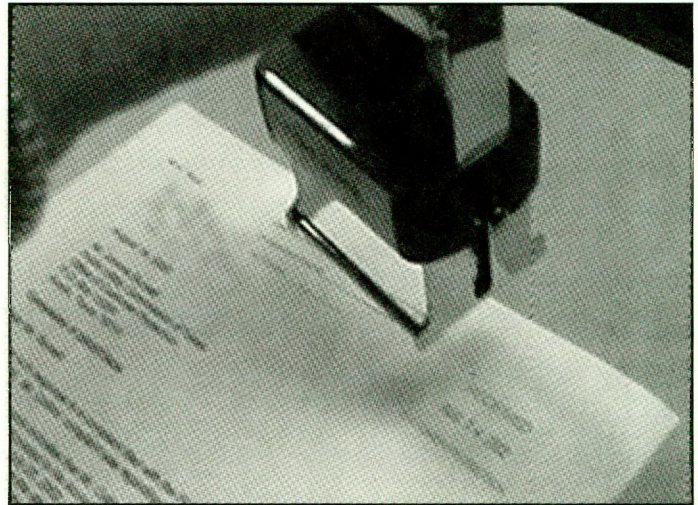
Not all items received by the PUC are complaints. Some are designated as inquiries or opinions. Each are handled differently.

Though most items are received by telephone, they are also received by mail, email, fax, walk-in or through the PUC's Web site. As they arrive they are reviewed to determine jurisdiction and are designated as "complaints," "inquiries" or "opinions."

Complaints – One of the PUC's Customer Protection Division's (CPD) key functions is to provide excellent customer service and complaint resolution. It includes communicating with customers, utility providers and other entities about a variety of telecommunication and electric issues. It is always a goal of the commission to perform complaint-solving operations as quickly, accurately and efficiently as possible while providing excellent customer service.

A CPD staff member reviews the complaint to determine what company the complaint is against as well as the nature of the complaint. For example, it can be a complaint about the addition of unauthorized charges to a phone bill. This practice is known as cramming. Other complaints include slamming, deceptive trade issues, telephone solicitation and local telephone and electric billing.

The customer's information is then entered into the



Most complaint items arrive at the PUC by mail. Others are received by email, fax, walk-in or through the PUC's Web site.

CPD database. All accompanying documentation is scanned into the database and becomes part of the customer's complaint file. The items are then prepared for distribution and processing.

Opinion – Opinions are entered into the database, reviewed and passed on to the appropriate PUC staff.

Inquiry – Inquiries include requests for information from the PUC, a request from a utility provider or a request for communication from the utility. An inquiry to the PUC is answered with a return letter to the customer and no further action is taken. An inquiry that requires interaction with a utility provider is sent to the utility provider with a request that it contact its customer. Although the utility provider may respond, it is not required to do so.

What if the PUC does not have jurisdiction? Well, these non-jurisdictional complaints are immediately closed with a return letter to the customer with advice on who to contact regarding the complaint.

Utility Q & A

Q: What are local toll calls?

A: Local toll calls are calls that cost more than a local call because they travel beyond your community but do not travel long enough to be considered long distance. Most Texans can choose a carrier for these calls other than the local service provider.

• • •

Q: What if I do not want to be identified on someone's Caller ID screen?

A: To protect personal privacy, state law requires telephone companies to offer a free blocking service to all customers where Caller ID is available.

Blocking prevents the display of your name and number. You can block all calls or selected calls. It is illegal to use Caller ID to compile and sell information about individuals without their consent. You may contact your local telephone service provider for this free service.

• • •

Q: What if I encounter a problem at a pay phone?

A: If you have a problem at a pay phone write down the following information and call the PUC at 1-888-782-8477:

- Pay phone provider
- Street address
- Telephone number
- Location of the pay phone/name of building or business.

• • •

Do You Have A Utility Question?

If you have a utility-related question that you would like answered in future publications send them to:

Public Utility Commission
Attn. PUC Connection
P.O. Box 13326
Austin, TX 78711- 3326
Email: customer@puc.state.tx.us



PUC on the road...

A representative of the Electric Choice Speaker's Bureau will be at the following meetings and special events. Informational material will be provided and Electric Choice representatives will be available to answer questions.

September 4

Rio Hondo - Senior Center
Tomball - Rotary Club of Tomball

September 5

Houston - Houston Minority Business Council Expo

September 6

Houston - NAACP Pre-Mobilization Meeting

September 10

Weslaco - Weslaco Senior Center
Brownsville - Casa de Amigos
Dallas - West Dallas Chamber of Commerce

September 12

Harlingen - Cesar Menchaca Senior Center
Raymondville - Eustolio Gonzales Senior Center

September 14

Dallas - Radio Unica Diez y Seis Celebration
Houston - Radio Unica Diez y Seis Celebration

September 17

San Benito - San Benito Senior Center
Harlingen - Heritage Manor Housing Project

September 17 & 18

Dallas - Dallas Regional Minority Enterprise Development

September 18

Houston - Living Information for Today Seniors Group
Dallas - Richard Hsu Activities Center

September 19

Corpus Christi - TXU Energy Assistance Meeting

September 26

Dallas-Elmwood Senior Center
Dallas- Walnut Hill Recreation Center

September 26 & 27

Corpus Christi - Bayfest
Houston - Houston Caribbean Festival

September 29

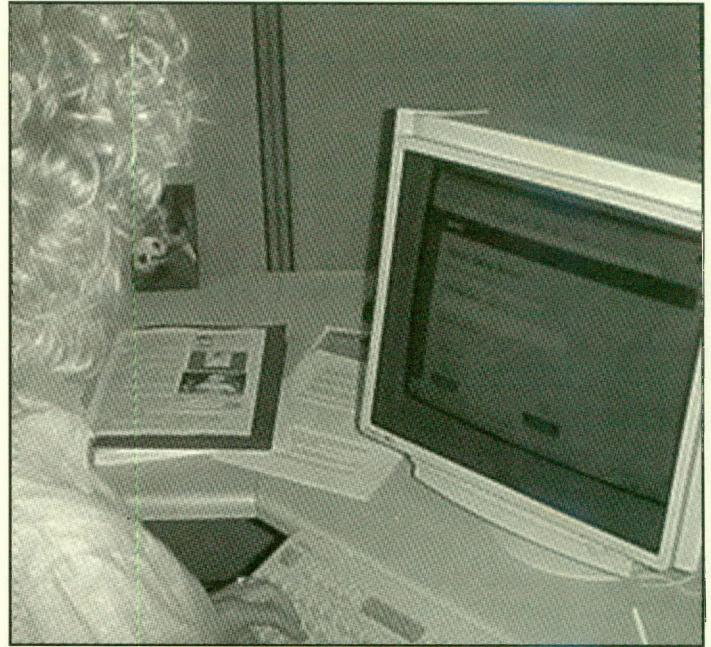
Dallas - Radio Unica Family Fun Day

October 12

Dallas - Health Fair

October 14

Kilgore - Kilgore AARP Meeting



Sprint Internet Protocol Relay (IP Relay) allows computer internet users access to Relay Texas.

Relay Texas can be accessed via internet

Sprint Internet Protocol Relay (IP Relay) service started in Texas on July 8. Computer users can now access Relay Texas by logging on to www.sprintrelayonline.com

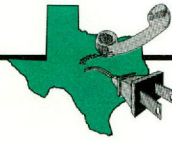
What is IP Relay? IP Relay means connecting to a relay agent via the internet – all you need is your computer – no special modems or a telephone. All you do is go to www.sprintrelayonline.com and sign in, and you will "chat" real time with an agent, who will make your call like any other standard (TTY) relay call.



However, Sprint's IP Relay will have unique interactive features such as language preferences in English, Spanish, and French Creole, and "emoticons", such as the trademark "I Love You" sign that will reduce typing. The web layout will offer relay users text size and color options, background color options, split screen feature, ability to clear the screen, and utilize macros such as GA and SK.

There are dialing instructions, online help, and connection capability to Sprint Relay Customer Service. You will also be able to send out emoticons (happy face, kiss, etc.) to convey your emotions.

Sprint is the carrier for Relay Texas through August 2005. Other carriers, such as MCI and AT&T also have IP relay.



Texas Do Not Call List continues to grow

The Texas Do Not Call list continues to grow as nearly 750,000 phone lines are currently enrolled. The Do Not Call list actually consists of two lists, one applies to all telemarketers operating in Texas the other applies only to Retail Electric Providers (REPs) and telemarketers calling to solicit your electric service.

Residential consumers who register for the Statewide Do Not Call list will avoid telemarketers including Retail Electric Providers and telemarketers calling on REPs' behalf. Business telephone numbers may be registered for the "Electric No Call" list only.

Telephone numbers registered during Jan. 1 through March 27 should have received a lot fewer telephone solicitations after July 1 when the lists became effective. Those who registered between March 28 and June 26 should experience fewer solicitations beginning Sept. 1. Those registered between June 27 and Sept. 26 should experience a lower call volume beginning Dec. 1.

If customers continue to receive telemarketing calls after the noted dates they should contact the PUC or the Office of the Attorney General to file a complaint against the telemarketer. They should provide as much information as possible including the name of the telemarketer, time and date of the phone call and phone number as it showed up on their caller ID, if available.

The PUC can be contacted at 1-888-782-8477 and the Office of the Attorney General-Consumer Protection Division can be reached at 1-800-621-0508. The Statewide Do Not Call list was intended to stop unwanted telemarketing calls to consumers from companies with whom the consumer has no prior business relationship.

Calls are exempt from the Do Not Call list if the:

- consumer requests contact from the company
- consumer has an established business relationship with the company
- call is to collect a debt
- call is on behalf of a non-profit organization or charity and the call does not meet the definition of a "telephone solicitation" by attempting to make a sale or gather information that will lead to a sale.

An established business relationship means that a

Statewide Do Not Call list:

This list applies to all telemarketers doing business in Texas no matter where their call center is located. Only residential consumers may register their home telephone number. The charge per residential telephone line is \$2.25. Your registered residential telephone number will remain on this list for three years.

Electric No Call list:

This list applies to Retail Electric Providers (REPs) and telemarketers calling about your electric service. Both residential and business customers can register their telephone number(s). The charge per phone line is \$2.55. Telephone numbers registered on this list will remain on the list for five years.

company you dealt with in the past can contact you up to a year after you have terminated your business relationship. Some calls are not telephone solicitation because they do not attempt to make a sale or gather information that will lead to a sale, such as telephone survey calls and calls from election or campaign headquarters.

Another exemption from the Do Not Call list is a call from a state licensee holder (for example an insurance or real estate agent, etc.) where the call is not made by an automated device; the solicitation transaction is completed with a face-to-face presentation to conclude the sales transaction and make payment, and the consumer has not previously told the license holder that the consumer does not wish to be called.

While the Statewide Do Not Call law does have some exemptions, the PUC believes that consumers who register for the list will experience a substantial reduction in telemarketing calls.

Registration is simple, consumers can call toll free 1-866-896-6225 to register, they can go on line at www.texasnocall.com or they can request an application in writing at Texas No Call, P.O. Box 313, E. Walpole, MA 02032.

Area Code Update

In November, 2001, the Commission approved a second area code for the 903 area code in northeast Texas. The code, an overlay, is 430.

Dates to remember:

• **Saturday July 20, 2002** - You can get in the habit of dialing ten digits to place a local call. The ten digits you need to dial are area code 903 and

the seven-digit telephone number. You can place local calls dialing either seven or ten digits. The new area code 430, is not yet available to be assigned to phone numbers.

• **Saturday, Feb. 15, 2003** - You must dial ten digits to place a local call. For approximately 60 days you will get a recorded message reminding you to

dial ten digits if you have dialed only seven. After that, your call will not go through. The new area code, 430, becomes official in April, 2003 and can be assigned.

• **Saturday, April 19, 2003** - Your call will not go through and you will receive no reminder to dial ten digits if you have only dialed seven.



FCC can help answer wireless phone questions, concerns

According to an estimate by J.D. Power and Associates, more than 52 percent of U.S. households currently own or use a mobile phone.

With so many people using mobile phones, complaints about contracts, fees or service quality are bound to crop up. While the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) does not have jurisdiction over wireless telecommunications services, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) may be able to help customers who have questions or concerns about their service.

The FCC does not regulate contractual arrangements with cellular providers, but it does handle complaints about wireless service. If you cannot resolve your complaint directly with the company, contact the FCC toll-free about your problem at 1-888-225-5322.

The FCC also offers the following resource Web sites for consumers interested in obtaining wireless service. The list is not complete but may help customers while

shopping.

Consumer Reports (www.consumerreports.org) provides free consumer information on its Web site, including details on the various mobile service plans available in major U.S. markets and their accompanying handsets.

J.D. Power (www.jdpower.com) provides ratings on its Web site of all of the U.S. wireless carriers in major U.S. cities.

CTIA (www.wow-com.com) is a trade association representing the wireless industry. Its Web site contains tips for consumers on purchasing mobile service as well as an overview of all mobile handsets that have hands-free accessories.

AARP, the American Association of Retired Persons, (www.aarp.com) provides on its Web site a published survey entitled Understanding Consumer Use of Wireless Telephone Service that discusses various issues related to wireless services and older consumers.

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