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Which Electric Companies Get Most Consumer Complaints?

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HOUSTON – Note: The following story is a verbatim transcript of a Troubleshooters story that aired on Thursday, Aug. 3, 2006, on KPRC Local 2 at 10 p.m.

Tired of rising electric rates? State and city leaders say you should shop around for the best deals. However, until now you've only been able to compare prices when deciding on an electric company.

So, our Troubleshooters did more investigating for you. Tonight, Troubleshooter Amy Davis shows you which electric companies customers complain about the most and how often the state finds them at fault.

These digital read-outs are fairly dummy-proof.

"I could have sent my 8-year-old grandson to do it and he would've done a lot better job," resident Mickey Thompson said.

It's why Mickey Thompson was dumbfounded when he got a series of soaring electric bills from TXU.

The first was \$700. Then, up to \$8,000.

"The next one was \$17,000," he said.

That's right – \$17,000 to cool his 1,500 square foot retail space; not the low advertised price that made Thompson pick TXU.

"I shopped around and they've got competitive rates," he said.

But what they didn't know is that TXU also has the highest number of customer complaints than any other electric provider in Texas.

Consumers can easily compare prices between electric companies. But, what you won't find on the state's www.powertochoose.org Web site is the number of disgruntled customers who have called to complain about their providers.

The Troubleshooters obtained the numbers from the consulting group Regulatory Compliance Services that reveal in 2005, 2,810 TXU customers filed complaints to the PUC.

Reliant received more than 1,100 complaints, almost tied with Centrica, the parent company for Direct Energy, WTU Energy and CPL.

Gexa came in fourth with 465 complaints.

"Keep in mind that TXU is the largest in Texas," said Carlos Santos with TXU.

TXU says the most important numbers are the ones that show you how often its company is actually at fault.

So, we dug deeper and found the Public Utility Commission found very few violations on the part of the provider.

According to the PUC, Gexa may have had fewer complaints. But it was at fault 22 percent of the time.

Centrica came in second with only 5 percent of the complaints panning out in the customer's favor.

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The companies with the most complaints, TXU and Reliant, were found in error only 4 percent of the time.

"You should definitely be aware of that when you're choosing a provider," Tracy Crow said

Thompson's daughter and store manager says had her family known about TXU's complaint history, they would have picked another provider.

"I will quit doing business with TXU when this all straightens out," she said.

Four months of frustration has taught Thompson the price per kilowatt may be less important than what a company may cost you in time.

Reliant Energy and Direct Energy both say the number of complaints they've received represent less than one percent of their customers.

No one from Gexa Energy returned our calls.

More Information:

- REPs With More Than 10 Complaints On File At The PUC Texas During 2005
Requires [Free Adobe Acrobat Reader](#)
- [Regulatory Compliance Services](#)
- [File Complaint With Texas Public Utility Commission](#)

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