

How to Choose an Electricity Provider who generates their power from Renewable Energy



In addition to conserving power and perhaps even generating some of our own, we have a choice of where we buy our electricity and how that electricity is generated. In northeast PA, PPL still distributes our power but we can choose to buy the electricity we use from any company who is licensed in Pennsylvania. Those companies often offer a variety of products. Recently, my chosen supplier, Clean Currents, went out of business. I was automatically switched back to PPL with no break in service. However, I wanted to choose another supplier who offers renewable energy from local sources.

I visited <http://www.papowerswitch.com/> and chose “shop for electricity.” I found 74 products available to me as a PPL customer. It can be overwhelming to sort through these but, fortunately, there is a search engine to help refine the process.

Because I am interested in renewable energy, I chose that under “Special Programs”. This narrowed my options to 29 products. I further refined my search by choosing Renewable PA so that my electricity will come from local wind and solar projects within Pennsylvania. I slid the button from 0% to 100% renewable energy and came up with 5 products to explore.

After further research on the websites of each company, I decided on Ethical Energy. They are Green-e certified (a national, third-party certification for renewable energy), a member of Green America (<http://www.greenamerica.org/>) and a B Corporation (certified by the nonprofit B Lab to meet rigorous standards of social and environmental performance, accountability, and transparency). I had a choice of a 3-month rate of 9.945 cents per kilowatt-hour or locking in at 11.67 cents/kWh for 12 months. There is no cancellation fee should I decide to switch again in the future.

When you do your own search on PA Power Switch, you can narrow down your results based on PA renewable or national renewable and what percentage of the power comes from renewable sources, fixed or variable price, length of term, no cancellation fee, and more. Results can be printed and/or exported to a spreadsheet for ease of comparison. When comparing plans I encourage you to click on the company’s website and explore each plan further. Often the price quoted on the PA Power Switch site is not the same for all of the choices a company might offer.

In conclusion, when researching electricity suppliers it’s important to be aware of a few things. There is no cost from PPL to switch to a different supplier. However, your new supplier may charge you if you want to switch from them “early.” Also, you will still pay a distribution charge to PPL (about 3 cents per kilowatt hour) in addition to fees associated with the service of the lines. Your electric bill will still come from PPL and will include their charges as well as charges from your chosen supplier. All suppliers, including PPL, adjust their rates periodically. You need to be aware of when that will happen for your chosen company and product.

Electric Choice in PA is an opportunity to be a responsible consumer of electricity and to support renewable energy in Pennsylvania and in the United States.

-Article contributed by Chris Weigand, a local educator in Honesdale, PA and SEEDS member.