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PECO Seeks Rate Increase Of 9 Percent For Average Household

Consumers will need to dig a bit deeper to pay their electric bills if a local utility gets its way.



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Posted Thu, Jun 3, 2021 at 5:25 pm ET | Updated Fri, Jun 4, 2021 at 3:16 pm ET

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By Rick Woelfel, [Delaware Valley Journal](#)

June 3, 2021

Consumers will need to dig a bit deeper to pay their electric bills if a local utility gets its way but customers can weigh in before a rate hike is approved. The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission is seeking public comment about PECO Energy's pending rate-increase proposal that would increase electric rates for the utility's 1.6 million Pennsylvania customers.

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On March 30, the utility submitted a rate increase request to the PUC which would provide with PECO approximately \$246 million per year, a boost of roughly 7 percent. If the entire increase is approved, PECO estimates the average residential customer, using 700 kilowatts per hour, would see their monthly bill increase by 9.65 percent, from \$100.29 to \$109.97.

A commercial customer, using 10,000 kWh, would see an increase from \$814.40 to \$859.08 or 5.49 percent while an industrial customer, using 200,000 kWh would see a boost from \$14,368.90 to \$15,041.87, an increase of 4.68 percent.

The proposal includes a provision that would provide relief to individuals and small businesses who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, including those who have been unemployed because of the pandemic, and businesses that have received a relief grant or are operating in low-income communities.

This is PECO's first rate increase request since 2018.

The PUC has scheduled four virtual hearings on the proposal which will include public comment via telephone. The hearings are scheduled for Tuesday, June 8 at 1:00 and 6:00 p.m. and Thursday, June 10 at the same times.

Tanya McCloskey the state consumer advocate weighed in on PECO's plans.

"I think it's very important that customers have this opportunity to give their input into the rate-increase process, express their concerns with the proposals that PECO has made, and provide the commission with information on the impact of a rate increase on their lives," she said.

McCloskey notes that seniors and others on fixed incomes would be especially impacted by any rate hike. "Folks that are on fixed incomes, their income isn't changing."

Sandy Murphy is Chester County's director of aging services. She says a rate hike could put the county's elderly residents at risk.

"The proposed rate increase by PECO could place economically insecure seniors at greater risk of utility shutoffs, thereby jeopardizing their health and safety," she said. "This increase, combined with the increased costs for food, common household goods, and out of pocket medical expenses, can lead to anxiety, compound medical issues, and cause seniors to skip meals or their medication regimens."

Residents who would like to listen to the hearings but do not wish to testify, can arrange to access an audio feed by telephone by contacting the Consumer Advocate's office.

The virtual hearings are just one step in the rate-approval process. The PUC has already voted to investigate PECO's request, effectively putting the increase on hold while the process plays out before Administrative Law Judge Marta Guhl.

Between now and the end of the year, the PUC will receive input from the Consumer Advocate office, which can offer witness testimony, as well as entities including the Office of Small Business Advocate, various community groups, and individual citizens.

Guhl will make a recommendation to the PUC, which has the final say in the matter. The commission may approve the entire request, a portion of it, or none at all. The PUC's final decision must be issued by December 29 of this year

PECO did not respond to requests for comment. However, if residents are upset with the proposed rate hike they can take their business to another of the 100 or so competitors in the area or have solar panels installed to defray their costs.

According to [Statista as of 2020](#), the most expensive states for electricity are Hawaii, Alaska and Connecticut. Pennsylvania was ranked at 16th, with lower costs than New York or New Jersey.

Advanced registration is required to participate in public comment. Call the Office of Consumer Advocate by calling 1-800-684-6560 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. The deadline for registration is 5:00 p.m. this Friday, June 4.

Meanwhile, the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is available for eligible Chester County residents, who may be impacted by an increase in utility rates. Community organizations can also provide help. Any seniors who are facing financial challenges brought on by increases in utility or other basic need costs should contact the Chester County Department of Aging Services at 610-344-6350.

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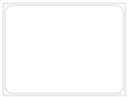
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