

# ABOUT PUBLIC POWER

# Powering Strong Communities



Community-owned, not-for-profit public power utilities power homes and businesses in 2,000+ communities — from small towns to large cities. They safely provide reliable, low-cost electricity to more than 49 million Americans, while protecting the environment. These utilities generate or buy electricity from diverse sources. They employ 93,000 people and earn \$58 billion in revenue each year. Public power supports local commerce and jobs and invests back into the community.

## By the Numbers



Across the U.S., 2011 public power utilities power **49 million people in 49 states and five territories**. Which means that 1 in 7 electricity customers is served by a public power utility.

Public power serves large cities like Austin, Nashville, Los Angeles, and Seattle, as well as small villages, rural towns, and the Navajo tribal territory. Most public power utilities have fewer than 4,000 customers.

## Affordable



Public power utilities are not-for-profit entities owned by their communities. So they provide electricity to customers at the lowest rates. **Homes powered by public power utilities pay nearly 15 percent less than homes powered by private utilities.** Businesses that get electricity from public power utilities also pay less than businesses that get electricity from private utilities.

## Reliable



Customers of public power utilities lose power less often. **Customers of a public power utility are likely to be without power for just 59 minutes a year**, compared to customers of private utilities that may lose power for 133 minutes a year — provided there are no major adverse events.

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CONTINUED...

## Electricity from Diverse Sources



**Public power generates 10 percent of all electricity in the U.S.** and distributes — or sells at the retail level — 15 percent of all power flowing to homes and businesses.

Public power utilities care for the environment while they buy or generate electricity from natural gas, coal, and nuclear, as well as renewable energy sources such as solar, water, and wind.

In several regions, public power utilities can buy wholesale hydropower generated from federal dams at cost and pass the savings on to customers. Across the country public power utilities buy wholesale electricity and other services through joint action agencies to leverage economies of scale and strength in numbers.

## The Community Connection



Like public schools and libraries, **public power utilities are owned by the community and run as a division of local government.** These utilities are governed by a local city council or an elected or appointed board. Community citizens have a direct voice in utility decisions and policymaking.

Public power infrastructure projects are often funded through the issue of tax-exempt municipal bonds.

Public power utilities are embedded into the fabric of their communities and support a range of community programs including charitable, educational, and beautification programs. On average, public power utilities pay 5.6 percent of electric operating revenues back to the community — through taxes, fees, and special services. **Public power gives 33 percent more back to the community than private utilities.**