



PLUGGED IN FEBRUARY 2024

 Central Coast Community Energy

Winter in California brings not just chilly weather, but also an opportunity for Californians to take charge of their energy bills in an exciting way! As the sun sets earlier and temperatures drop, energy usage naturally rises with everyone turning on their heaters to stay cozy, But fear not! Amidst PG&E's rate increases, there's a beacon of hope with cost-saving options. Discover how you can navigate through these challenges and embrace the thrill of saving money while keeping warm this winter!

In this newsletter, you'll find:

- **How PG&E's 2024 Rate Increase Impacts You**
- **Eight Ways to Minimize Your Energy Costs**
- **3CE Helps Local Libraries Install EV Charging Stations**
- **Invite 3CE to Present to Your Group**
- **Upcoming Meetings**

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How PG&E's 2024 Rate Increase Impacts You

January marked the start of a series of significant rate hikes for PG&E customers. These increases will also affect Central Coast Community Energy (3CE) customers. On average, customers can immediately expect their PG&E costs to increase by more than \$30/month. The CPUC approved PG&E's rate increase citing the need for substantial infrastructural investment to ensure the safety and reliability of its energy services.

3CE customers, like all PG&E customers, are impacted by the rate increase because all customers receive transmission and distribution services from PG&E. Today, 3CE customers continue to realize significant savings across all customer classes. On average, residential customers save 23%, commercial customers save between 23%-28%, and agricultural customers save 24% on their generation rates with 3CE.

The top drivers of PG&E's rate increases are the costly investment in undergrounding electric lines to decrease wildfire risk, and PG&E's high cost of borrowing. PG&E is also responsible for all gas services and increases apply to all customers; 3CE does not supply any gas services. For the average residential customer, the PG&E rate increase will be about \$33, or 13% per month. You can view a cost comparison for an average customer at [Find Your Best Rate Plan \(pge.com\)](https://www.pge.com).

Eight Ways to Minimize Your Energy Costs



A variety of tools and resources are available to customers looking to lower their electric bill. Taking advantage of these strategies and programs can help take stress off the grid at times of peak usage while putting money back in your pocket.

1. Understand and respond to Time-of-Use rate changes, and sign up for OhmConnect

If you are on a Time-of-Use rate plan, it is important to understand the hours when electricity is most expensive. Generally, energy costs are significantly higher from 4 pm to 9 pm. The increased cost for these peak times is due to both higher demand and a drop in energy production, especially from solar. Moving your heavy usage from “peak” to “off peak” hours can let you significantly lower your electricity bill without changing your consumption. For example, if you have an electric vehicle or a hybrid, consider charging after 9 pm or midnight, depending on your plan.

To help our customers manage their energy usage, 3CE has partnered with OhmConnect, a free service that rewards users for conserving energy. When you sign up, you'll receive alerts when electricity is most expensive. If you use less energy during this time, OhmConnect will reward you with gift cards or even cash via PayPal — in addition to the savings on your utility bill. Participants can also win prizes and buy discounted smart-home tech in the Rewards Marketplace. It takes just two minutes to join, and if you sign up with the link below, you can receive \$50!

[Sign Up to Save with OhmConnect](#)

2. Check your rate plan using a rate comparison tool

Both PG&E and SCE offer online calculators to help determine the most cost-effective rate plan based on your historical usage. Please note that while these calculators base their estimates on the cost of PG&E- or SCE-only service, they should offer 3CE customers insight into their best rate.

[PG&E Rate Comparison Tool](#)

[SCE Rate Comparison Tool](#)

3. Switch to PG&E's Electric Home Rate Plan

If you are a PG&E customer and have begun to electrify your home with an electric vehicle, battery storage, heat pump space conditioning or a heat pump water heater, you may want to consider the Electric Home Rate Plan (E-ELEC). This rate includes a \$15-per-month Base Services Charge, but the average cost per unit of energy is lower. The plan works well for customers who charge their electric vehicle(s) overnight and shift their energy usage to lower-priced times of day.

[PG&E's Electric Home Rate Plan Webpage](#)

4. California Alternate Rates for Energy Program (CARE) and Family Electric Rate Assistance Program (FERA) (monthly bill discounts)

CARE and FERA are discount programs that provide significant discounts to customers who qualify for bill assistance based on their household size and income.

[PG&E's CARE / FERA Webpage](#)

[SCE's CARE / FERA Webpage](#)

5. Medical Baseline Program (monthly bill discounts)

The Medical Baseline Program, also known as the Medical Baseline Allowance, is an assistance program for residential customers who depend on power for certain medical and independent living needs. This program provides:

- A lower rate on your monthly energy bill
- Extra notifications in advance of a Public Safety Power Shutoff

How the Medical Baseline Program Works: All residential customers receive an allotment of energy every month at the lowest price available on their rate. This is called the Baseline Allowance.

The Medical Baseline Program requires you to continue paying your monthly PG&E or SCE bill. Nonpayment can result in the disconnection of your utility services.

[PG&E's Medical Baseline Webpage](#)

[SCE's Medical Baseline Webpage](#)

6. Arrearage Management Plan (AMP) Program (bill payment assistance)

AMP is a payment plan option to help qualifying residential customers reduce unpaid balances on their bills. In SCE's service area, this program is administrated by PG&E and SCE, regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), and available to all customers.

[PG&E'S AMP Webpage](#)

[SCE's AMP Webpage](#)

7. (LIHEAP) (bill payment assistance / energy savings)

Are you struggling to pay your electric bills and potentially could be disconnected? LIHEAP provides residential customers with financial support.

There are several portions of the program that help accomplish this goal, such as:

- The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) provides one-time financial assistance to help balance an eligible household's utility bill
- The Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) assists income-eligible households that are in crisis. An example would be a household receiving a 24-48 hour disconnect notice or service termination by their utility company. Another example would be a household facing an energy-related crisis that could be deemed potentially life-threatening in the household, such as a combustible appliance
- LIHEAP Weatherization provides free energy efficiency upgrades for income-eligible households to lower their monthly utility bills while also improving the health and safety of the household's occupants
- Education on basic energy efficiency practices and instruction on the proper use and maintenance of installed weatherization measures
- Energy budget counseling

[LIHEAP Webpage](#)

[ComUnify \(Santa Barbara County\)](#)

8. Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP)

The Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) is designed to help you save money by capping monthly electric and gas charges at a set amount, plus taxes and fees. The four-year program began in 2023 and is available to a limited number of income-eligible customers.

[3CE's PIPP Webpage](#)

3CE Helps Local Libraries Install EV Charging Stations



This month, Central Coast Community Energy (3CE) and the County of Santa Cruz unveiled three public electric vehicle charging stations at the Aptos Branch Library, funded with help from a \$20,000 rebate from 3CE's Charge Your Fleet Program. 3CE has previously funded the installation of two Level 2 chargers each at Capitola Library, Felton Library, and Santa Cruz Main Library.

Cities and counties served by 3CE can apply to the 3CE Charge Your Fleet Program for rebates that are granted after purchase and installation of EV charging equipment. Eligible costs to be covered through these rebates include equipment, labor, and related electrical updates. Installing EV charging stations helps our communities reduce emissions and increase accessibility for EV drivers, and library parking lots are efficient locations.

In addition to supporting transportation electrification at local libraries in Santa Cruz, 3CE is providing \$240,000 for building electrification of the Downtown Library Mixed-Use Project through 3CE's New Construction Electrification Program. These funds will cover most costs including installation labor for the project's all-electric appliances such as heat-pump water heaters and heat recovery ventilation systems.

Invite 3CE's Outreach Team to Present to Your Group

Central Coast Community Energy (3CE) offers outreach presentations to local groups, focused on providing information about the agency's commitments to clean and renewable energy, competitive rates, and community investment.

If you are interested in having 3CE present to your group, please contact Sophia Schwirzke at sschwirzke@3ce.org.

Upcoming Meetings

Central Coast Community Energy encourages public participation in agency meetings, held in person and on ZOOM with available dial-in options. Attendees may provide live public comments remotely through ZOOM or submit them in advance via email at publiccomments@3ce.org. Sign up to receive public board notices that include meeting details.

[DATES AND LIVESTREAM INFO](#)



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