



For Immediate Release

E SOURCE Announces Top Utility Web Sites **Study Finds Making Payments Online Is Hard for Customers**

BOULDER, CO, August 18, 2009—According to the latest E SOURCE benchmark results for the performance of North American utility web sites, the top-rated U.S. electric and gas web sites belong to Avista Utilities, Arizona Public Service, South Carolina Electric and Gas, Wisconsin Public Service, Pacific Gas and Electric, and Alliant Energy. The top-rated Canadian utility web sites belong to BC Hydro and Union Gas.

The “E SOURCE 2009 Review of North American Electric and Gas Company Web Sites” assessed the web sites of 100 U.S. and Canadian utilities. Between December 2008 and May 2009, a team of residential customers accessed and used the top 31 web and mobile features (both content information and self-service tasks) identified by a 2008 E SOURCE market research study as the features residential customers most want to see on their utility’s web site. Testing the utility web sites on mobile devices was a new element of this year’s study. The reviews were conducted from the perspective of general Internet use, so the sites were rated against the best in class across all web sites, not just utility web sites.

This new study—the fifth E SOURCE web site review—is the largest, most detailed benchmark of electric and gas web sites available. E SOURCE found that both utility customer expectations and utility web sites have changed significantly since earlier reviews. Florence Connally, a research manager at E SOURCE, said, “Utilities are taking note that web sites are an important customer service channel and have taken strides to make them customer friendly. This year, utilities that offer more of the features residential customers want had more user-friendly web sites. In previous studies, we found outliers that focused more on customer experience and not on functionality and vice versa. That is no longer the case.”

Overall, E SOURCE found that utility web sites are catching up with customer expectations, as demonstrated by the fact that utilities now offer 77 percent of the features that customers want. Stephanie Cary, a senior research associate at E SOURCE, explained, “Electric and gas companies can never stand still. Just when they refine their web site offerings to match consumer expectations, new twists come along, such as our finding that consumers now expect to navigate the utility site through Google sitelinks.”

Eastern U.S. PPL Electric is the top ranked utility in the eastern region and was the only utility from this region to rank in the top quartile. Pepco and Connecticut Light & Power earned second and third respectively.

Midwestern U.S. Wisconsin Public Service captured the top rank in the midwestern region. Alliant Energy and We Energies rounded out the top three.

Southern U.S. South Carolina Electric and Gas ranks highest in the southern region. Dominion and Progress Energy earned the next two highest scores.

Source: “E SOURCE 2009 Review of North American Electric and Gas Company Web Sites”
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Western U.S. Avista Utilities earned the top rank in the western region. Arizona Public Service and Pacific Gas and Electric were the next highest performers.

Canada. BC Hydro, Union Gas, and SaskEnergy are the top performing Canadian web sites.

“As more customers turn to their utility’s web site to report electric outages or pay their bills, the focus of these web sites needs to be online self-service. Utility web sites are at their best when there is a problem such as a gas leak or power outage, but surprisingly, we found that one of the hardest features to use is simply making a payment,” said Andrew Heath, director of E SOURCE Customer Satisfaction Services.

E SOURCE members will learn more about the findings from the benchmark study in a special web conference today. Others interested in learning about the key findings should attend the 22nd Annual E SOURCE Forum (www.esource.com/forum2009) being held in Denver, Colorado, September 21–25, 2009.

This “E SOURCE 2009 Review of North American Electric and Gas Company Web Sites” final report includes benchmarking information, best practice advice, and detailed recommendations for utilities wishing to provide a positive online experience for their residential customers. For more information about this comprehensive report, please visit www.esource.com/public/products/Web_2009_Review.

About E SOURCE

E SOURCE has been providing unbiased, objective energy business intelligence to over 300 utilities and large energy users for more than 20 years. Our benchmarking services are supported by the latest market research looking at what customers want in utility self-service. That research helps us determine what utility IVR and web site tasks and functions should be assessed during our reviews. Our research analysts and consultants are among the best minds in the business, delivering significant and timely research that equips our customers with the right information at the right time to make better, faster decisions. We predict and address trends, technologies, and problems related to energy efficiency, utility customer satisfaction, program design, marketing, customer management, and sustainability.

Public Relations Contact

For details about scheduling interviews with the research staff or service manager involved with this benchmark study, please contact:

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NOTE: one chart follows.

Performance Ranking of U.S. and Canadian Web Sites

Functionality and average usability ratings were combined with equal weighting to determine the overall performance index, which has a maximum possible value of 1,000. The web sites were then ranked in descending order.

Rank	Company name	Score
Top Quartile		
1	Avista Utilities	821
2	Arizona Public Service (APS)	788
3	South Carolina Electric and Gas	787
4	Wisconsin Public Service Corp.	782
5	Pacific Gas and Electric Co.	769
5	Alliant Energy	769
7	BC Hydro	751
7	Union Gas Limited	751
9	Dominion Virginia Power	734
10	Progress Energy	733
11	Alabama Power	731
12	PPL Electric Utilities	728
13	Duke Energy	724
14	San Diego Gas & Electric Co.	723
15	Salt River Project (SRP)	722
15	We Energies	722
17	Puget Sound Energy	718
18	Peoples Gas Delivery (Illinois)	715
19	American Electric Power	713
19	SaskEnergy	713
19	PacifiCorp	713
22	Southern California Gas Co.	708
23	Memphis Light, Gas & Water Division	703
23	Vectren	703
23	Westar Energy	703

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Rank	Company name	Score
Second Quartile		
26	NW Natural	698
27	New Brunswick Power	697
28	Portland General Electric	693
28	Florida Power & Light	693
28	Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD)	693
31	SaskPower	689
32	Ameren	685
33	ComEd	679
34	Georgia Power	667
35	Kansas City Power & Light	666
36	DTE Energy	663
37	NV Energy	658
38	MidAmerican Energy	653
38	Southern California Edison	653
40	PNM	648
40	Reliant Energy	648
42	Pepco	645
42	Manitoba Hydro	645
44	Connecticut Light & Power	643
45	Terasen Gas Inc.	642
46	CPS Energy	632
47	New York State Electric & Gas	628
48	Otter Tail Power	625
49	Nicor Gas	621
49	Los Angeles Department of Water & Power	621
Third Quartile		
51	Enbridge Gas Distribution	618
52	Hydro Ottawa Limited	616
53	Idaho Power	613
53	NorthWestern Energy–Montana	613
53	Washington Gas	613
56	National Grid New York	612
56	Public Service Electric and Gas	612
58	Central Maine Power	610
59	Con Edison	606
60	Oklahoma Natural Gas Co.	605
61	Hydro One Networks	601
61	Hydro-Québec	601
61	Tampa Electric Co.	601
64	Xcel Energy	595
65	Omaha Public Power District	591
66	Atmos Energy	590

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Rank	Company name	Score
66	Jersey Central Power & Light	590
68	Louisville Gas & Electric	590
69	Virginia Natural Gas	588
70	Black Hills Energy	583
70	Nova Scotia Power	583
72	Consumers Energy	578
73	Long Island Power Authority	577
74	Entergy Louisiana	576
74	Laclede Gas	576
Fourth Quartile		
76	NSTAR	575
77	Questar Gas	571
78	Centerpoint Energy (Minnesota)	567
79	ENMAX	556
79	Duquesne Light	556
81	Baltimore Gas & Electric	554
82	Hawaiian Electric Co.	550
83	PECO Energy	547
84	Allegheny Power	535
85	Direct Energy (Texas)	531
86	Oklahoma Gas & Electric	529
87	Austin Energy	525
88	Columbia Gas of Ohio	523
88	Gaz Métro	523
90	TXU Energy	520
91	Silicon Valley Power	511
92	Toronto Hydro-Electric System Ltd.	488
93	Southwest Gas	487
94	Missouri Gas Energy	485
95	Pedernales Electric	458
96	Dayton Power & Light	440
97	Piedmont Natural Gas	436
98	National Fuel Gas	431
98	Philadelphia Gas Works	431
100	EPCOR	412

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