

# CONSUMER SPOTLIGHT

Public Utility News You Can Use

Issue 21 | October 2016



## Acting DCA Executive Director Named

In September, Dean Nishina became the acting Executive Director of the Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs (DCCA) Division of Consumer Advocacy (DCA). He steps in as Jeffrey Ono vacated the position at the end of August. Ono served as the Consumer Advocate for five years; appointed under former Governor Neil Abercrombie.

Nishina has been with DCA for over 23 years, most recently serving as the division's Public Utilities Administrator. This is not his first time as executive director—he's served in the role from 2009 through 2010, until the appointment of Ono was made.

"I am confident that the Division will be able to continue its tradition of producing excellent work product," said Nishina. "We will continue our work with the objective of doing our best and being proud of what we do for Hawaii's consumers." Appointment of a new executive director has yet to be announced.



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### Did you know...

In August 2016, there were 4,632 passenger electric vehicles in Hawaii. That's up 25.6% from the same month last year.



Source: Hawaii DBEDT, Research & Economic Analysis Division, Monthly Energy Trend



Governor David Ige addressed the conference attendees at the 8th Annual Hawaii Clean Energy Day held at YWCA Laniakea on August 16, 2016.

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## NextEra-HECO Merger Denied

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) rejected the application for a merger between NextEra Energy, Inc. and Hawaiian Electric Industries, Inc. (HEI).

NextEra Energy, Inc. and HEI sought to merge in a \$4.3 billion transaction that would fundamentally change the ownership structure of our state's largest electric utility.

The Division of Consumer Advocacy was actively involved in reviewing the proposed merger, providing expert witnesses and analysis to assess whether the merger was in the best interest of Hawaii's consumers. The Consumer Advocate ultimately recommended to the PUC that the merger be rejected in its entirety because the applicants had not adequately quantified the consumers' benefits.

The Commission agreed that NextEra and HEI had not shown the application to be reasonable and in the public interest with respect to five fundamental areas of concern: (1) benefits to ratepayers; (2) risks to ratepayers posed by NextEra's complex corporate structure; (3) Applicants' clean energy commitments; (4) the proposed Change of Control's effect on local governance; and (5) the proposed Change of Control's effect on competition in local energy markets.

You can view all the public documents filed in the merger proceeding on the PUC's Document Management System (DMS) by entering "2015-0022." in the "Docket Quick Link" box.

The news release and summary of the Order No. 33795 can also be found on our website.

## Understand Your Electric Bill

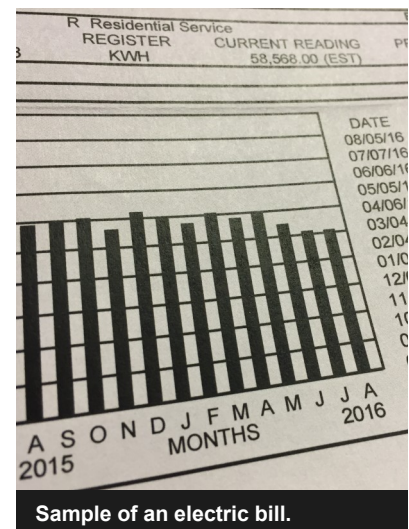
You must pay your electric bill in a timely fashion in order to receive continuous electric service. The basic form of your electric bill will contain common elements regardless of which company provides your electric service.

For customers with Net Energy Metering (NEM) systems, your bill will look slightly different. One notable difference is the credits for net customer generation. The net kWh is converted into a monetary credit for use on billing within a 12-month period.

A more detailed overview of what to look for in your electric bill can be found on our website at:

[http://cca.hawaii.gov/dca/electric/electric\\_bill/](http://cca.hawaii.gov/dca/electric/electric_bill/)

You can also contact your local electric utility for a detailed explanation of your bill.

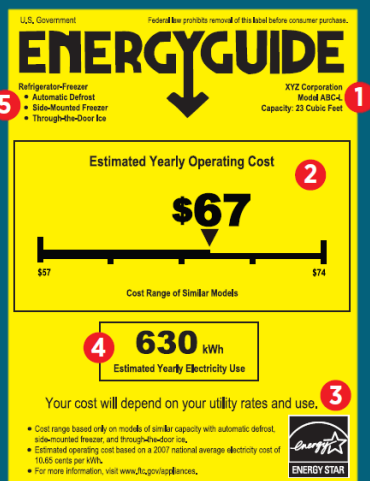


Sample of an electric bill.



## How to Read an EnergyGuide Label

An EnergyGuide label is required to be placed on all appliances by the manufacturers. The label provides information about energy consumption and shows you how much energy an appliance uses compared with similar models. Keep in mind that the numbers are averages. Read more about this on the Department of Energy website at [energy.gov](http://energy.gov).



1. Maker, model number, and size of the appliance.
2. Estimated yearly operating cost and the range of operating costs for similar models.
3. The ENERGY STAR® logo indicates that this model meets strict criteria for energy efficiency.
4. Estimated yearly electricity consumption.
5. Key features of the appliance and the similar models that make up the cost comparison range.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy, Office of the Efficiency and Renewable Energy. "EnergySavers". pp. 29.



iStock image

## Blue Jay Wireless Reach Settlement in Lifeline Probe

In a recent news release, the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Enforcement Bureau announced that it has reached a settlement with Blue Jay Wireless to resolve an investigation into whether the company improperly enrolled several thousand Hawaiian customers as eligible for enhanced Tribal support reimbursements from the FCC's Lifeline program.

The investigation found that Blue Jay had incorrectly requested and received Lifeline Tribal reimbursements for enrolled consumers who did not reside on Hawaiian Home Lands. This settlement ensures a total of \$2,002,000 in reimbursements by Blue Jay to the Universal Service Fund, including the company's forfeiture of \$918,010 in Lifeline disbursements that the Public Utilities Commission has already frozen.

The Lifeline program provides a discount on phone service so that low-income consumers have access to the communications tools necessary to connect with jobs, family, and emergency services. Qualifying low-income consumers who reside on Tribal lands, which include Hawaiian Home Lands in the State of Hawaii, are eligible for higher support from the Lifeline program (up to an additional \$25 per month).

**PUC Docket Numbers are included in these articles for further, in depth reading. PUC public filings are accessible online via the PUC's Document Management System (DMS). Visit: <http://dms.puc.hawaii.gov/dms>**

# 2016 Lifeline Income Level

# of persons per dwelling unit	Income Requirement
1	\$18,455
2	\$24,881
3	\$31,307
4	\$37,733
5	\$44,159
6	\$50,585
7	\$57,011
8	\$63,464
Each additional person add	\$6,453

Each year the income eligibility amounts change for the Lifeline program, which offers discounted monthly phone service for low-income consumers through eligible telecommunications carriers.

View the new guidelines to see if you qualify this year for the Lifeline program. Only one Lifeline benefit is permitted per household. If his or her household currently has more than one Lifeline, they must select a single provider .

Participating carriers in Hawaii include Blue Jay Wireless, Budget Mobile, Hawaiian Telcom, Inc., Mobi PCS, Safe Link Wireless,

Tempo Telecom, LLC, and Total Call Mobile, Inc.

Lifeline is a government benefit program supported by the federal Universal Service Fund (USF). Visit our website or the Federal Communications Commission's website at <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/lifeline-support-affordable-communications> for more information about the program and determine if you are eligible.

## Upcoming Dates of Interest

- Sep 23-25: The Good Life Expo—Hawaii Seniors' Fair
- Nov 8: Election Day (State holiday, our office will be closed).
- Nov 11: Veteran's Day (State holiday, our office will be closed).

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### Federal Communications Commission (FCC)

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### Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC)

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