

CONSUMER SPOTLIGHT

**STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE & CONSUMER AFFAIRS
DIVISION OF CONSUMER ADVOCACY**



Executive Director's Message

By: Dean Nishina



I hope everyone had a great 4th of July. The Division of Consumer Advocacy's website contains useful information regarding who we are and what we do as well as advocacy efforts and up-to-date utility information. With the links on the site you can learn more about such things as how to read a monthly

utility bill, and find helpful links and other information that can assist you in learning more about public utilities. The Consumer Advocate welcomes questions and concerns regarding utilities. Please do not hesitate to contact our office via email at dca@dcca.hawaii.gov.

Now that summer is in full swing, keep reading for small steps you can take to increase your homes energy efficiency. Highlighted is another article describing the current utility bill assistance programs actively working to help those with a financial need. This newsletter also includes details and links to watch recent status conferences and an info briefing the Public Utilities Commission held. Lastly, is a short article describing ETC's participation in the High-Cost Program.

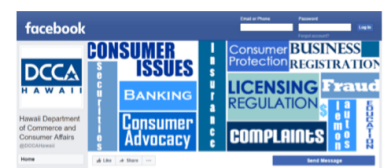
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RENEWABLE ENERGY IOI

- Renewable energy is energy collected from sources that are naturally and constantly replenished.
- Although weather can affect the ability of renewables to generate electricity, paired with battery storage, renewables are more reliable than ever.
- Solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, and hydropower are the five main types of renewable energy.
- Hawaii was the first state to set a deadline for generating 100% of its electricity from renewable energy sources, which is set to be achieved by 2045.



us!

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6 SMALL STEPS TO AN ENERGY-EFFICIENT HOME

As summer gets into full swing, temperatures are heating up, which means higher power bills for most. If you're looking to minimize your power bills over the summer months see below for 6 small steps you can take!

1. Keep your AC unit's air filter clean and unobstructed.

If the air filter hasn't been changed or cleaned in a while, it could be causing your system to run less effectively.

2. Check if your thermostat is placed on the correct wall.

Place your thermostat in an interior wall of a commonly used room that's away from windows, outside doors and appliances that may give off heat.

3. Use blinds and window coverings to the best of your advantage.

Use blinds, curtains and any other window coverings you might have to prevent heat from entering.

4. Keep cool by using ceiling fans when in a room.

Cooling wind chill effect on your skin makes a room feel up to 8 degrees cooler.

5. Carefully consider your options when cooking at home.

Using your oven and stovetop can create a lot of indoor heat during the summer months, causing your AC to work even harder.

6. Turn off unnecessary lights and unplug your devices.

Devices can give off heat and unnecessarily run up your power bill.

UTILITY BILL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE



The Division of Consumer Advocacy wants to help inform consumers who may be in need of assistance of programs they may qualify for. Please note that, due to the high demand for assistance, the following programs may quickly reach capacity. Check directly with assistance providers for the most up-to-date information.

- **Department of Hawaiian Homelands Rent Relief Program**
 - Provides rent and utility assistance to native Hawaiians on the DHHL Waiting List who experienced financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic and are renters in the State of Hawaii.
- **Emergency Broadband Benefit**
 - Helps families and households struggling to afford internet service during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Hawaii County Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP)**
 - Provides grants to low-income renters on Hawaii Island who have lost or reduced income due to COVID-19 for paying rent, utility bills, or both.
- **Kaua'i 2021 Coronavirus Rental and Utility Assistance Program**
 - Designed to support individuals and families pay essential cost of living expenses. Eligible expenses include future rent, rental arrears and utilities in arrears for the period March 2020 through December 2021.
- **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**
 - Provides heating and/or cooling assistance to needy Hawai'i households by assisting with a one-time payment towards their utility bill (electric or gas) in two ways:
 - **Energy Crisis Intervention (ECI)** assists households in crisis. **Applications for ECI are accepted year-round, but the amount of approvals each month are limited and fill quickly.*
 - **Energy Credit (EC)** assists households who are not in crisis but need assistance with bill payment for the heating and cooling of their residence. **Applications for EC are accepted once a year, June 1-30.*
- **Maui County Emergency Rental Assistance Program**
 - Helps low-income households that have been hit hardest financially by the COVID-19 pandemic pay their rent, utility bills, or both.
- **Rental & Utility Relief Program (Currently Paused)**
 - Helps qualified people on O'ahu pay for their rent and their bills for electricity, water and sewer, and natural gas. The program is temporarily closed to new applications for processing.

Visit the Division of Consumer Advocacy website for up to date COVID-19 utility bill assistance <https://cca.hawaii.gov/dca/covid-19-utility-assistance-programs/>.

Recent Status Conferences & Informational Briefing

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) recently held four status conferences and one informational briefing. See below for details and links to watch the recordings.

Status Conference to Discuss HECO's Plans for the Retirement of the AES Coal Plant (2021-0024)

The PUC held this Status Conference to receive a number of updates, as well as to ask follow-up questions of Hawaiian Electric in response to recently-issued Commission information requests, related to system reliability and planning surrounding the retirement of the AES coal plant on Oahu.

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=d0gRmQ1Jxx0>

Status Conference on HECO's Scheduled Dispatch Program Implementation Plan (2019-0323)

The PUC held this Status Conference to (1) receive responses from Hawaiian Electric on questions posed by the Commission; and (2) provide docket Parties an opportunity to discuss concerns with Hawaiian Electric's Scheduled Dispatch Program Implementation Plan.

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=omGAuL5COTo>

Status Conference to Discuss Interconnection-Related Issues for the Kapolei BESS Project (2020-0136)

The PUC held this Status Conference to discuss interconnection-related issues regarding the Kapolei BESS Project, including the Proposed Stipulated Procedural Schedule filed jointly by the Parties and Participant on June 21, 2021, the underlying issue of the anticipated completion date of the Interconnection Requirements Amendment, and related matters regarding the remainder of the proceeding in Docket No. 2020-0136.

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=mpBiwEzPegI>

Status Conference to Discuss the Molokai RFP and CBRE program for Molokai (2019-0178, 2015-0389)

The PUC held this Status Conference to review Hawaiian Electric's Molokai Request for Proposals ("Molokai Plan"), filed on March 29, 2021 (Docket No. 2019-0178), the Community-Based Renewable Energy (CBRE) program for Molokai (Docket No. 2015-0389), and stakeholders' comments in response to these filings.

<https://youtube.com/watch?v=oOppWORjGgk>

Informational Briefing on Ho'omaka Hou June 22, 2020 Incident, Hilo, Hawaii

The PUC held this Informational Briefing on the investigation into the Ho'omaka Hou June 22, 2020 Incident in Hilo, Hawaii. Presentations of findings will be made by representatives from each agency and from Young Brothers, and will be followed by questions from the Division of Consumer Advocacy and the Commission.

<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=RLgpuMZGGzk>

A Proceeding to Investigate Whether Designated ETC's Participating in the High-Cost Program of the Universal Service Fund Should be Certified By the Commission (2021-0045)

This new docket was opened to determine whether state designated eligible telecommunications carriers ("ETCs") in the State of Hawaii participating in the high-cost support program of the federal universal service fund ("USE") should be certified by the Commission in 2021.

Federal regulations require state commissions that desire ETCs to receive high-cost support to annually submit a certification that the ETCs have used and will use the support only for the provision, maintenance, and upgrading of facilities and services for which the support is intended.

The program is designed to ensure that consumers in rural, insular, and high-cost areas have access to modern communications networks with the goal of allowing eligible carriers who serve these areas to recover some of their costs from the federal Universal Service Fund.

Applying the federal rules, the Commission must act on or before October 1, 2021, for ETCs to receive high-cost support in the succeeding year.



What Is Water Conservation?

Water conservation is the practice of using water efficiently to reduce unnecessary water usage. According to [Fresh Water Watch](#), water conservation is important because fresh clean water is a limited resource, as well as a costly one. As a homeowner, you're probably already well aware of the financial costs of inefficient water use. Conservation of this natural resource is critical for the environment — and our wallets.

MYTH NO.

3

Smart meters
will not keep
my data secure.

MYTHS VS. FACTS: THE TRUTH ABOUT SMART METERS

TRUTH: Just as the banking, credit card and cable industries have provided secure access to your information online, the utility industry is poised to do the same using advanced security and encryption technology to safeguard your data.

TRUTH: Utilities are involved in national consortiums and work with national cyber-security to regularly audit their systems to ensure privacy and security of smart meters.

The privacy of your data is protected now. Utilities work constantly to safeguard it. That will not change with the use of smart meters.

STAY TUNED FOR MORE MYTHS VS. FACTS



Consumer Spotlight

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Subscribe on our website at cca.hawaii.gov/dca/subscribe.

We also welcome feedback and story ideas. Email us at dca@dcca.hawaii.gov.

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