



ComEd plans to push efforts that cut bills

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ComEd customers may pay more for new conservation programs but could save in the long run, consumer advocates and the utility said Thursday.

The Illinois Commerce Commission, which regulates ComEd, has approved energy efficiency programs proposed by ComEd, downstate utilities and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity.

Different programs will roll out at different times. They include discounts on energy efficient light bulbs; the pick up and recycling of older, inefficient refrigerators; air conditioning "tune ups" and other measures designed to reduce energy consumption.

ComEd said consumers overall could save roughly \$155 million during the lifetime of the programs, possibly up to 10 years. That could save 1.2 megawatts of power, or enough to power 140,000 homes for one year, ComEd spokesman John Dewey said.

"These programs were designed to place ComEd in the top three for annual energy saved and Illinois second in the country," Dewey said. "We could be in the forefront as a national leader."

The energy-saving plans were filed in response to a new law requiring utilities to administer energy efficiency programs in Illinois. Many states, including Iowa, have such programs, the ICC said.

The new law requires the utilities to ramp up energy efficiency savings annually, meaning in the first year, the utilities must decrease electric consumption by .2 percent, and then the savings requirement increases every year until June 1, 2015, when it caps at 2 percent.

"This is a good first step," said Jim Chilsen, spokesman for consumer watchdog Citizens Utility Board. "We're glad ComEd is faced by last year's rate relief law to implement some efficiency programs."

Such programs aren't free. These could cost the average customer here about \$3 for the first year and up to \$9 by the third year, said Dewey.

ComEd's 3.8 million customers in northern Illinois will see nominal surcharges on their monthly bills after some of the programs start in June, Dewey said. But, as an example, a family with an average monthly bill of \$75 could save 4 percent, or \$3, by changing light bulbs to more efficient compact florescent lamps and other measures, Dewey said.

For more information, go to www.comedcare.com.