



# CUSTOMER FACTS

## Central System or Nonsubmetered Master Metering

Texans living in apartments, condominiums, mobile home parks, and other multiple unit complexes have their electric power meters read by the complex or park management rather than by the electric company. This arrangement is known as submetering. Some other apartment residents don't have a separate meter for their unit but pay their share of the complex's total power bill based on the size of their apartment or condo. This is known as central system or nonsubmetered master metering. Customers with either metering arrangement should know their rights and the landlord's responsibilities.

### Rental Agreement Requirements

The rental agreement for every central system or nonsubmetered master metered residence shall include information on central system or nonsubmetered master metering as provided in this narrative or a copy of the Public Utility Commission rules (Section 25.141) that cover central system or nonsubmetered master metering ([www.puc.state.tx.us/rules/subrules/electric.index.cfm](http://www.puc.state.tx.us/rules/subrules/electric.index.cfm)). The lease must also clearly state that the tenant is responsible for the cost of electricity serving their unit and all heated and/or air conditioned common areas, such as laundry rooms, community centers, and workout facilities.

### Electric Rates

Central system or nonsubmetered master metering utility bills are based on either the total square footage living area of the dwelling unit as a percentage of the total square footage living area of all dwelling units of the apartment house and all heated and/or air conditioned common areas or

as the usage of the dwelling unit as a percentage of the sum of the individually metered or submetered usage of all dwelling units. If the percentage of area method is used, the percentage must be stated in each tenant's rental agreement.

### Electric Bills

Electric bills for central system or nonsubmetered master metering customers should be sent out monthly, unless service is rendered for less than that period. The bill must use the same billing unit (usually kilowatt hours) as used by the electric provider in its bill to the complex. The bill must include the payment due date, the meter reading, the rate per kilowatt hour and the total amount due for that billing period. Charges for central system or nonsubmetered master metering electricity must be billed separately from a tenant's bill for rent or any other charges. If a tenant's rental agreement requires him/her to pay a portion of the electricity costs for common areas, these costs must be billed separately and not included in the central system or nonsubmetered master metering electric bill.

If a tenant's payment is late, the landlord may charge a one-time, late payment penalty of no more than 5% of the amount due. It is a violation for a tenant's electric service to be disconnected for non-payment of rent. Disconnection of a dwelling unit by the apartment owner is governed by Texas Property Code §92.008(b). Disconnection of electric service by a retail electric provider is governed by PUC Substantive Rule §25.483(k).

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giving the tenant the address and telephone number of the Commission's Customer Protection Division.

Disconnection of service by an electric utility that is not a transmission and distributed utility is governed by §25.29(j) of this title (relating to Disconnection of Service).

If a central system or nonsubmetered master metering bill is found to have over or under charged a tenant, the landlord must calculate an adjustment. If a tenant is due a refund, the adjustment must be made for the entire period of the overcharges. If the complex underbills a tenant, the property owner may back bill the tenant for the amount of the underbilling for up to six months, unless the owner can provide records that justify back billing for a longer period. If the underbilling is \$25 or more, the apartment owner must offer the tenant a deferred payment plan option for the same length of time as the underbilling.

The property manager must keep records of the complex's electric bills, calculation of average cost of electricity, submetering reports, and submeter tests for the current month plus the previous 12 months. Tenants have the right to inspect any of these reports during normal business hours or at a time mutually arranged between the tenant and the property manager.

**Disputes**

In the event of a dispute between the tenant and the owner regarding any bill, the tenant can file a complaint with the owner. The owner has 30 days from the date of dispute notification to investigate and report the results to the tenant. If the tenant is dissatisfied with the results of the investigation, the owner shall inform the tenant of the Public Utility Commission of Texas complaint process,

**QUESTIONS:**

**Call:** 1-888-782-8477, in Austin 512-936-7120 (TTY 512-936-7136) (FAX 512-936-7003)

**Visit:** [www.puc.state.tx.us](http://www.puc.state.tx.us)

**Email:** [customer@puc.state.tx.us](mailto:customer@puc.state.tx.us)

**COMPLAINTS:**

**Call:** 1-888-782-8477, in Austin 512-936-7120 (TTY 512-936-7136) (FAX 512-936-7003)

**Write:** PUC - Customer Protection Division

P.O. Box 13326, Austin, TX 78711-3326

**Online:** <http://www.puc.state.tx.us/consumer/complaint/Complaint.aspx>