

# Environmental Disclosure

A Consumer Guide



*“The goal of environmental disclosure is to facilitate informed customer choice, which could, in turn, lead to improved environmental quality and resource diversity.”*

— Public Service Commission 12/15/98



New York State Public Service Commission  
William M. Flynn, Chairman

# A Message from Governor George E. Pataki

New York State is recognized as a national leader in protecting and improving our environment. We have gained this reputation by promoting a wide range of programs in our daily lives that help preserve the vibrancy of the environment for future generations of New Yorkers. These programs include clean air and water



technologies and energy conservation efforts. Our development of an environmental label for electricity customers is a natural step in our continued commitment to protecting the high quality of life in New York.

All suppliers of electricity in New York State will now periodically provide environmental disclosure information about fuel sources used to generate the electricity you use and certain air emissions that result from its production. The fuel mix and air emission information on the disclosure label will help develop a market for “green power,” and it will allow you to compare the electricity provided by your supplier with the electricity offered by other suppliers. This knowledge can be important when you shop for electricity.



Our state’s environmental disclosure label will help you understand more about the energy you use. By being well informed, we all become better stewards of New York’s environment.

*George E. Pataki, Governor*

## Fuel Sources

Electricity can be generated using many different fuel sources as shown on the right. The environmental disclosure label provides information on your supplier's "fuel mix," i.e., the types and percentages of fuels used to generate the electricity your supplier provided to you during a given time period.

## Air Emissions

The Air Emissions portion of the environmental disclosure label provides information on the levels of three air pollutants associated with the generation of electricity and how the emissions from electricity sold by your supplier compare to the statewide average for a given time period.

The environmental disclosure label you receive from your supplier will be in a similar format to what is shown on the right. Your electricity supplier will send it to you at least twice a year.

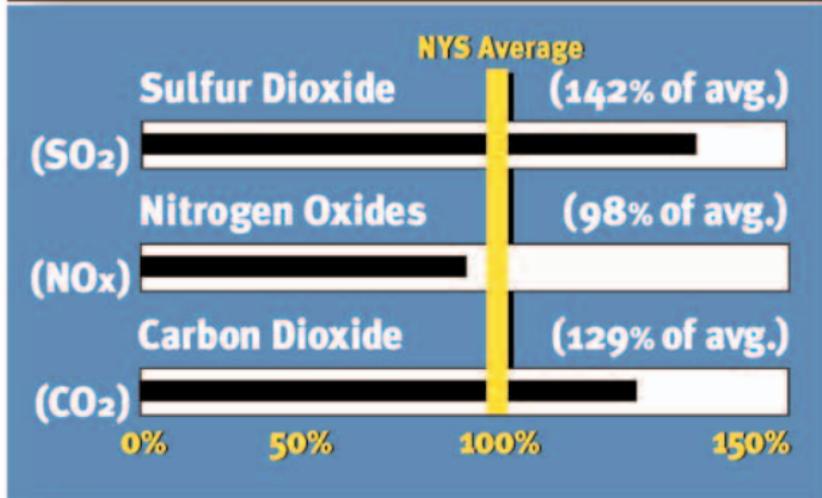


## Sample Label

### Fuel Sources Used to Generate Your Electricity

Biomass	Less than 1%
Coal	20%
Natural Gas	33%
Oil	6%
Hydro	20%
Nuclear	20%
Solar	Less than 1%
Solid Waste	1%
Wind	Less than 1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Air Emissions Relative to the New York State Average



## Fuel Sources

**Biomass** – fuels such as landfill gas, wood and other plant matter.

**Coal, Natural Gas and Oil** – fossil fuels.

**Hydro** – falling water from rivers or dams.

**Nuclear** – nuclear energy.

**Solar power** – energy from the sun transferred by photovoltaics.

**Solid waste** – fuels such as municipal waste.

**Wind** – from wind turbines.

## Air Emissions

The Air Emissions graph shows the average Sulfur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), Nitrogen Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), and Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions of the electricity sold by your supplier for a given time period specified on the label.

The horizontal bars show how the emission levels of your supplier's electricity compare to the average emission levels (the vertical line) of all the suppliers selling electricity in New York.

If your company exceeds 100 percent in an air emissions category, the emissions level is higher than the statewide average of all the electricity suppliers in the state. Similarly, if the percentage is less than 100 percent, the emissions level is lower.



# The Environmental Label Provides Information on Three Air Emissions.

Sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides are key pollutants that contribute to acid rain and smog, and carbon dioxide contributes to global climate change. These pollutants are associated with the combustion of fossil or other fuels to make electricity.

**Sulfur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>)** is a heavy, colorless gas that once in the air may undergo a chemical transformation into sulfates and sulfuric acid, contributing to acid rain. Electric generation facilities are the largest source of SO<sub>2</sub> emissions. SO<sub>2</sub> emissions are controlled and monitored by federal and state environmental regulatory programs.

**Nitrogen Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>)** are compounds of nitrogen and oxygen that once in the air may undergo a chemical transformation into nitrates and nitric acid, contributing to acid rain and ground-level ozone (photo-chemical smog). Electric generation facilities are a major source of NO<sub>x</sub> emissions. NO<sub>x</sub> emissions are controlled and monitored by federal and state environmental regulatory programs.

**Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)** is a colorless, odorless gas that allows light from the sun's rays to be transmitted to the Earth's surface but blocks heat radiating from the Earth's surface from escaping into the atmosphere, thus contributing to global climate change or warming due to the "greenhouse" effect. Electric generation facilities are a major source of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are monitored by federal and state environmental programs.

Depending on fuel source, size, and location, the generation of electricity may also result in other public health, environmental and socioeconomic impacts not disclosed above.

# What is Environmental Disclosure?

The New York State Public Service Commission now requires all suppliers of electricity to provide their customers with periodic environmental disclosure statements. These statements, called environmental disclosure “labels,” provide plain language information on what fuels the suppliers use to generate electricity, the air emissions resulting from generating electricity, and a comparison of those emissions to a statewide average.

# Why is Environmental Disclosure Important?

With the recent changes in the energy industry, consumers within New York State can now shop for an electricity supplier that offers the best price and value for their energy dollars. In addition, environmental disclosure allows consumers to consider the environmental impact of generating electricity when selecting electricity suppliers. The environmental disclosure label is designed to help you understand how producing that electricity affects the environment.



## For Additional Information

You can contact the New York State  
Public Service Commission for:

- information on energy competition and how to choose an electricity or gas provider.
- an up-to-date list of retail electricity providers.
- historic fuel mix and air emissions data.

Call the PSC toll-free Consumer Information  
line 1-888-Ask-PSC1 (1-888-275-7721)

Access the PSC Web sites at:

[www.dps.state.ny.us](http://www.dps.state.ny.us)

[www.AskPSC.com](http://www.AskPSC.com)

**Write to:**

Secretary

NYS Public Service Commission

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