

Renewable Power FAQs

What is “new” energy?

New energy is generated by power projects that began operations after January 1, 2001. Because these facilities are recent additions to the electric grid, the electricity they generate offsets older forms of generation that typically generate air pollution. All of the renewable options PGE offers, wind or a combination of renewable energy, qualify as “new”.



Why doesn't PGE just give 100 percent renewable energy to everyone without charging more?

PGE attempts to keep costs as low as possible for all customers. Currently, renewable power is more expensive than our traditional Basic Service mix. PGE is adding more wind power to our overall mix all the time, but for now customers who want even more renewable energy have the option to pay a little more for that choice.

If I choose a renewable option, where does my money go?

Funds received from participating customers are used to purchase renewable energy certificates from regional renewable energy facilities equal to the customer's purchase and may support the construction of new community-based projects that increase public education and awareness of renewable technologies as well as growing the support for renewable energy through customer education and outreach efforts and to cover the costs of offering the program. We are required

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by regulations to allocate the costs associated with PGE's renewable power program to customers who choose to participate, and we do not make a profit by offering renewable options to customers. For every dollar spent, 67% goes to the purchase of renewable energy and 33% towards education, outreach and administration.

What happens after I sign up?

We enter your information into a database. Within a few weeks you will receive a welcome letter. The charge will appear on your bill one to two billing cycles later. You can switch back to traditional power at any time, with no penalty or fee. Simply call us and ask to cancel your renewable power option.

How does renewable energy get to my house or business?

Imagine the electric grid as a giant bathtub that's constantly being filled from many different faucets — each one representing a different energy source such as hydroelectric, coal, natural gas and wind. Turn on a light, and you drain a little water from the tub.

Most of the water entering the tub is from faucets connected to traditional energy sources. But some of the water comes from a growing number of faucets from clean, renewable sources, which contribute pure, clean water. As demand for renewables increases, more clean water goes into the tub — and less of the traditional sources. So the electricity entering the grid on your behalf comes from pollution-free, renewable sources.

What are Renewable Energy Credits?

When a renewable energy facility operates, it creates electricity that is delivered into a vast network of transmission wires, often referred to as "the grid." The grid is segmented into regional power pools; in many cases these pools are not interconnected.

To help facilitate the sale of renewable electricity nationally, a system was established that separates renewable electricity generation into two parts: the electricity or electrical energy produced by a renewable generator and the renewable "attributes" of that generation.

The renewable attributes or "green" attributes are sold separately as renewable energy certificates (RECs). Only one certificate may be issued for each unit of renewable electricity produced. The electricity that was split from the REC is no longer considered "renewable" and cannot be counted as renewable or zero-emissions by whoever buys it.

With the purchase of RECs, you are buying the renewable attributes (i.e. environmental benefits) of a specific amount and type of renewable energy generation. You will continue to receive a separate electricity bill from PGE. Your purchase of renewable certificates helps offset conventional electricity generation in the region where the renewable generator is located. Your

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purchase also helps build a market for renewable electricity and may have other local and global environmental benefits such as reduced global climate change and regional air pollution.

The renewable certificates in this product are verified and certified by Green-e[®] Energy. Each supplier of renewable certificates is required to disclose the quantity, type and geographic source of each certificate. Please see the Product Content Label (PDF) for this information. Green-e Energy also verifies that the renewable certificates are not sold more than once or claimed by more than one party. For information on Green-e Energy please visit their website www.green-e.org.

Who is Green Mountain Energy Company?

Green Mountain Energy Co. provides energy to PGE for the Green Source and the Habitat Support options. They are the nation's largest and fastest growing residential provider of cleaner electricity. They are the folks you see staffing tables at storefronts and events, and stopping door to door through our Courtesy Knock program.

What is geothermal energy?

Geothermal energy is generated from the immense amount of heat that is trapped and naturally occurring beneath the earth's crust. Geothermal plants convert this heat into power by piping hot steam and water to the earth's surface and using them to turn electrical turbines. Geothermal energy is most abundant in areas along the edges of tectonic plates where the ground is volcanic.

What is biomass energy?

Biomass energy is a general term referring to the power generated by burning plant and organic matter, gases emitted by decomposing garbage, or municipal solid waste. While the first two sources produce little to no emissions, the third produces questionable emissions, which is why PGE does not purchase this third type.