



## Press Release

### **J.D. Power and Associates Reports: Utility Customers Most Satisfied with High-Volume Website Functions, but Other Online Tools Create Challenges**

#### Customers Express Frustration with Finding Energy-Saving Tips, Current Electricity Usage Information Online

**WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 12 April 2012** — Utility websites do particularly well in providing their customers with a satisfying online experience for reviewing account information online and scheduling payments, but new or more complex functions, such as setting up an account or finding information on how to save energy, are among the most difficult for customers to understand, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2012 Utility Website Evaluation Study<sup>SM</sup> (UWES) released today.

The inaugural study examines the usefulness of utility websites by examining five key factors: appearance; clarity of information; navigation; range of services; and speed. The study is designed to provide utility companies with an objective assessment of customers' satisfaction with their website; establish performance benchmarks; provide improvement recommendations; and identify best practices across the industry.

Among the 48 utility companies included in the study, AEP, Alabama Power and PPL Electric Utilities perform particularly well in overall customer satisfaction with electric utility websites, providing customers with sufficient information to easily self-service their accounts.

Overall customer satisfaction with the usefulness of utility company websites is 828 on a 1,000-point scale. Satisfaction is highest for the most often used, high-volume functions that are easiest to locate and use, such as logging in, reviewing accounts and making payments. However, satisfaction is lower for more complicated functions, such as setting up an online account, researching energy-saving information and updating utility service.

Customers who experienced difficulty locating the area on the website for their recent energy usage indicate that links are not clear or require multiple clicks to other areas of the site. Additionally, many customers say they expected energy usage information to be more easily accessible on their utility's website and they did not expect to have to access this information by opening a copy of their current bill.

“Customers' expectations for locating information online may be set by their experiences with other sites such as for their bank, television or mobile phone company where they can review their historical information and likely have access to real-time data,” said Andrew Heath, senior director at J.D. Power and Associates. “Illustrating online how much energy a customer uses and making it easy for them to access such information presents utilities with an opportunity to improve overall customer satisfaction.”

The study finds that a utility company's ability to utilize its website to answer customers questions or efficiently manage their utility account increases the likelihood of customers returning to the website and recommending it to others. Among highly satisfied customers, 73 percent say they “definitely will” return to the website for future account transactions and 57 percent say they “definitely will” recommend the site to friends and family.

Conversely, just 37 percent of dissatisfied customers say they “definitely will” return to the website and only 13 percent “definitely will” recommend it.

“Being unable to perform simple tasks on their utility’s website may be frustrating for many customers and discourage them from returning, so it is vital to create processes that are easy to understand and navigate,” said Heath. “As satisfaction increases, the likelihood for customers to return to the website and to recommend it also increase, which may potentially reduce operational costs and reduce the amount of traffic to call centers when customers have questions.”

The 2012 Utility Website Evaluation Study also finds the following usage trends among utility companies and their customers:

- Just 9 percent of customers have accessed their utility’s website using a smartphone and 5 percent have done so using a tablet.
- Among smartphone users, 35 percent are interested in using their device to report power outages and 33 percent are interested in reviewing account information.
- Of the 48 utilities evaluated in the study, 85 percent include some form of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube, directly on the home page.
- More than 70 percent of utility companies currently use Facebook to post company updates and respond to customer comments, and more than 60 percent use YouTube to provide videos on a number of topics, such as safety and saving energy.

The 2012 Utility Website Evaluation Study (UWES) is based on evaluations from more than 5,000 electric utility residential customers. Forty-eight electric utility companies with at least 500,000 residential customers were included in the study. The study was fielded in February 2012.

#### **About J.D. Power and Associates**

Headquartered in Westlake Village, Calif., J.D. Power and Associates is a global marketing information services company providing performance improvement, social media and customer satisfaction insights and solutions. The company’s quality and satisfaction measurements are based on responses from millions of consumers annually. For more information on [car reviews and ratings](#), [car insurance](#), [health insurance](#), [cell phone ratings](#), and more, please visit [JDPower.com](http://www.JDPower.com). J.D. Power and Associates is a business unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

#### **About The McGraw-Hill Companies**

McGraw-Hill announced on September 12, 2011, its intention to separate into two public companies: McGraw-Hill Financial, a leading provider of content and analytics to global financial markets, and McGraw-Hill Education, a leading education company focused on digital learning and education services worldwide. McGraw-Hill Financial’s leading brands include Standard & Poor’s Ratings Services, S&P Capital IQ, S&P Indices, Platts energy information services and J.D. Power and Associates. With sales of \$6.2 billion in 2011, the Corporation has approximately 23,000 employees across more than 280 offices in 40 countries. Additional information is available at <http://www.mcgraw-hill.com/>.

#### **J.D. Power and Associates Media Relations Contacts:**

John Tews; Troy, Mich.; (248) 680-6218; [media.relations@jdpa.com](mailto:media.relations@jdpa.com)

Syvetril Perryman; Westlake Village, Calif.; (805) 418-8103; [media.relations@jdpa.com](mailto:media.relations@jdpa.com)

No advertising or other promotional use can be made of the information in this release without the express prior written consent of J.D. Power and Associates. [www.jdpower.com/corporate](http://www.jdpower.com/corporate)

Follow us on Twitter [@JDPOWER](https://twitter.com/JDPOWER)

# # #

(Page 2 of 2)