



E Source Announces Top Electric and Gas Company IVRs for 2013

By Kym Wootton

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Utility interactive voice response systems (IVRs) continue to improve, offering customers a better experience than in years past, according to the E Source Review of North American Electric and Gas Company IVRs: 2013. The top-rated US electric and gas company IVRs belong to Pacific Gas and Electric, Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, and Portland General Electric. Union Gas Limited, Nova Scotia Power, and Hydro-Québec operate the top Canadian utility IVRs.

The E Source Review of North American Electric and Gas Company IVRs: 2013 is based on the company's assessment of 96 utility IVRs. Reviewers searched for and rated 10 key features that residential customers want and expect to find on a utility IVR. The final score for each IVR is a combination of two factors: was the feature available and, if so, how easy was it to use.

The companies in the first quartile showed significant improvement in their scores since the last review in 2011. When scoring these criteria, companies can achieve a maximum of 1,000 points. This year, all of the companies in the first quartile rated above 700 points, with the top company IVR scoring an incredible 913. In 2011, only 8 of 21 utilities in the first quartile scored above 700, with the highest rating being 809.

"The increased effort put forth to make the IVR experience positive is great news for consumers. Although more and more customers are turning to the website to conduct business, there will always be a segment that wants to use the telephone as a contact channel, at least in the foreseeable future," explains Rich Goodwin, manager of Customer Experience & Marketing at E Source. "It's very encouraging to see that utilities haven't given up on this contact channel and continue to improve it."

Several of the top-performing companies in this IVR study also scored in the first quartile in the [E Source](#)

[Review of North American Electric and Gas Company Residential Websites: 2013](#). Says Goodwin, “That just reinforces that those companies are trying to provide their customers with a good, consistent experience, no matter what channel the customer chooses.”

As technologies continue to evolve, E Source noticed the emergence of well-executed open-response speech-recognition IVRs. “Providing excellent experiences in the IVR means giving customers choice, clarity, and ease of use. Though touch-tone continues to be the most prevalent IVR technology used by utilities, we found that the handful of IVRs implementing well-executed open-response technology received the highest usability ratings,” explains Sarah Fiebiger, manager of Market Research Services at E Source.

Regional rankings are as follows:

- **Canada:** Union Gas Limited, Nova Scotia Power, Hydro-Québec
- **US, Midwest:** DTE Energy, American Electric Power, Peoples Gas
- **US, Northeast:** Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Public Service Electric & Gas, National Grid
- **US, South:** Duke Energy Progress, Florida Power & Light Co., South Carolina Electric and Gas (SCANA)
- **US, West:** Pacific Gas and Electric, Portland General Electric, Arizona Public Service (APS)

Rankings per utility type:

- **Electric:** Portland General Electric, American Electric Power, Florida Power & Light Co.
- **Gas:** Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Peoples Gas, Union Gas Limited
- **Combined gas and electric:** Pacific Gas and Electric, Duke Energy Progress, DTE Energy

For more information about this comprehensive study, please visit www.esource.com/ivr-review.

Performance ranking of US and Canadian IVRs, 2013

Functionality and average usability ratings were combined with equal weighting to determine the overall performance index, which has a maximum possible value of 1,000. The IVRs were then ranked in descending order.

Rank	Company name	Score	Rank	Company name	Score
Top quartile			Third quartile		
1	Pacific Gas and Electric	913	51	Ameren Illinois	600
2	Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania	888	52	Entergy Corp.	592
3	Portland General Electric	825	53	KCP&L	582
4	Duke Energy	811	54	NSTAR	575
5	DTE Energy	797	54	San Diego Gas & Electric	575
6	American Electric Power	791	56	Nashville Electric Service	571
6	Florida Power & Light Co.	791	57	SRP (Salt River Project)	567
6	Public Service Electric & Gas	791	58	BC Hydro	564
9	Arizona Public Service (APS)	775	58	Southwest Gas Corp.	564
9	South Carolina Electric and Gas (SCANA)	775	60	Atmos Energy	550
11	Duke Energy Progress	769	60	Hydro One	550
12	Peoples Gas	759	60	Hydro Ottawa	550
13	Vectren	756	60	Nicor Gas Co.	550
14	Southern California Edison	750	60	Oklahoma Natural Gas	550
15	Union Gas Limited	742	60	Toronto Hydro-Electric System	550
16	National Grid	728	60	Washington Gas	550
16	Southern California Gas Co.	728	67	Austin Energy	529
18	Cleco Power LLC	725	67	Duquesne Light	529
18	PacifiCorp	725	67	Jersey Central Power & Light	529
20	Wisconsin Public Service	713	67	Philadelphia Gas Works	529
21	NIPSCO	707	67	Westar Energy	529
21	Nova Scotia Power	707	72	Georgia Power	525
21	PECO	707	72	New Mexico Gas Co.	525
21	PPL Electric Utilities	707	72	New York State Electric & Gas	525
21	Silicon Valley Power	707	72	SaskPower	525
Second quartile			Fourth quartile		
26	MidAmerican Energy	697	76	Tampa Electric Co.	511
27	Avista	696	77	Long Island Power Authority	508
28	CenterPoint Energy	686	78	Alliant Energy	500
29	Hydro-Québec	681	78	Laclede Gas	500
30	FortisBC	675	78	Los Angeles Dept. of Water and Power	500
31	Idaho Power Co.	671	78	Manitoba Hydro	500
31	Sacramento Municipal Utility District	671	78	Questar Gas	500
33	Baltimore Gas and Electric Co.	666	83	Consolidated Edison Co. of New York	483
33	ComEd	666	84	Consumers Energy	481
33	Indianapolis Power & Light Co.	666	84	Enbridge Gas Distribution	481
33	NorthWestern Energy	666	84	Piedmont Natural Gas	481
33	Seattle City Light	666	84	Puget Sound Energy	481
38	Black Hills Energy	654	88	Alabama Power	475
38	Énergie NB Power	654	89	Dominion	450
38	Gainesville Regional Utilities	654	89	PNM	450
38	Xcel Energy	654	91	ENMAX	425
42	Memphis Light, Gas & Water Division	644	92	EPCOR	400
43	Newfoundland Power	638	93	CPS Energy	388
44	Ameren Missouri	636	94	TXU Energy	317
45	OG&E	633	95	Reliant Energy	288
46	Pepco Holdings	618	96	Direct Energy	225
46	We Energies	618			
48	Dayton Power and Light Co.	613			
48	NW Natural	613			
50	NV Energy	603			

About E Source

For 25 years, E Source has been providing unbiased, objective research and advisory services to over 300 utilities and large energy users. Our energy experts have answered more than 8,000 questions over the past 3 years. This guidance helps our customers advance their efficiency programs, enhance customer relationships, and use energy more efficiently.

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