



Press Release

J.D. Power and Associates Reports: Among Customers of Georgia Natural Gas Retailers, Low Customer Satisfaction Leads to Higher Switching Risk

Walton EMC Ranks Highest in Customer Satisfaction among Georgia Retail Natural Gas Providers

WESTLAKE VILLAGE, Calif.: 15 June 2011 — Approximately 15 percent of customers of Georgia natural gas retailers say they plan to switch providers within the next 12 months, while an additional 15 percent indicate they switched within the past year, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2011 Georgia Retail Gas Provider Satisfaction StudySM released today.

The inaugural study measures customer satisfaction with retail natural gas providers in Georgia by examining four key factors (listed in order of importance): price; billing and payment; communications; and customer service. Starting in 1998, the natural gas utility market in the Georgia was deregulated and opened to retail competition. According to the Energy Information Administration, approximately 1.5 million Georgia households are served by retail natural gas providers.

The study finds that customers who indicate they are likely to switch providers are notably less satisfied than those who indicate they are likely to stay with their current provider—by a difference of 125 points on a 1,000-point scale (560, on average, compared with 685).

“Although Georgia has a mature retail gas market, the fact that nearly one-third of customers are switching providers—or contemplating switching—indicates ample opportunity for improving customer satisfaction,” said Chris Oberle, senior director of the energy practice at J.D. Power and Associates. “There is a clear connection between high levels of satisfaction and increased customer loyalty, both of which are essential for any Georgia gas retailer that wants to retain and grow its customer base.”

Walton EMC ranks highest among retail gas providers in Georgia, achieving a score of 724 and performing well in all four factors. Following in the rankings are SCANA Energy (672)¹ and Gas South (671).

Overall satisfaction among Georgia natural gas retail customers averages 667 in 2011. Customers are particularly satisfied with the customer service (728) and billing and payment (718) factors and are least satisfied with the communications factor (605).

The study also includes the following key findings:

- Approximately 43 percent of customers indicate having phone or online customer service contact with their gas retailer during the past three months. The most frequently cited reasons for contacting the retailer are general billing and payment questions.
- Billing and payment satisfaction is highest among customers who pay their bill through a recurring credit card payment, compared with customers who use other payment methods, including payment through the retailer website, by automatic deduction from a bank account, through their bank’s website or by mail.

¹ SCANA Energy is ranked separately from SCANA Energy Regulated Division. The SCANA Energy Regulated Division provides natural gas service to low-income and elderly customers and to individuals whose credit histories prohibit them from obtaining service from other gas retailers.

- Communications satisfaction is highest among customers who say they received between four and nine communications from their gas retailer during the past three months, compared with customers who received fewer than four or more than nine communications.

The 2011 Georgia Natural Gas Retail Provider Customer Satisfaction Study is based on responses from more than 1,800 customers of natural gas retailers in Georgia. The study was fielded between April and May 2011.

For more information, view [Georgia retail gas provider ratings](#) at [JDPower.com](#).

About J.D. Power and Associates

Headquartered in Westlake Village, Calif., J.D. Power and Associates is a global marketing information services company providing forecasting, 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](#). J.D. Power and Associates is a business unit of The McGraw-Hill Companies.

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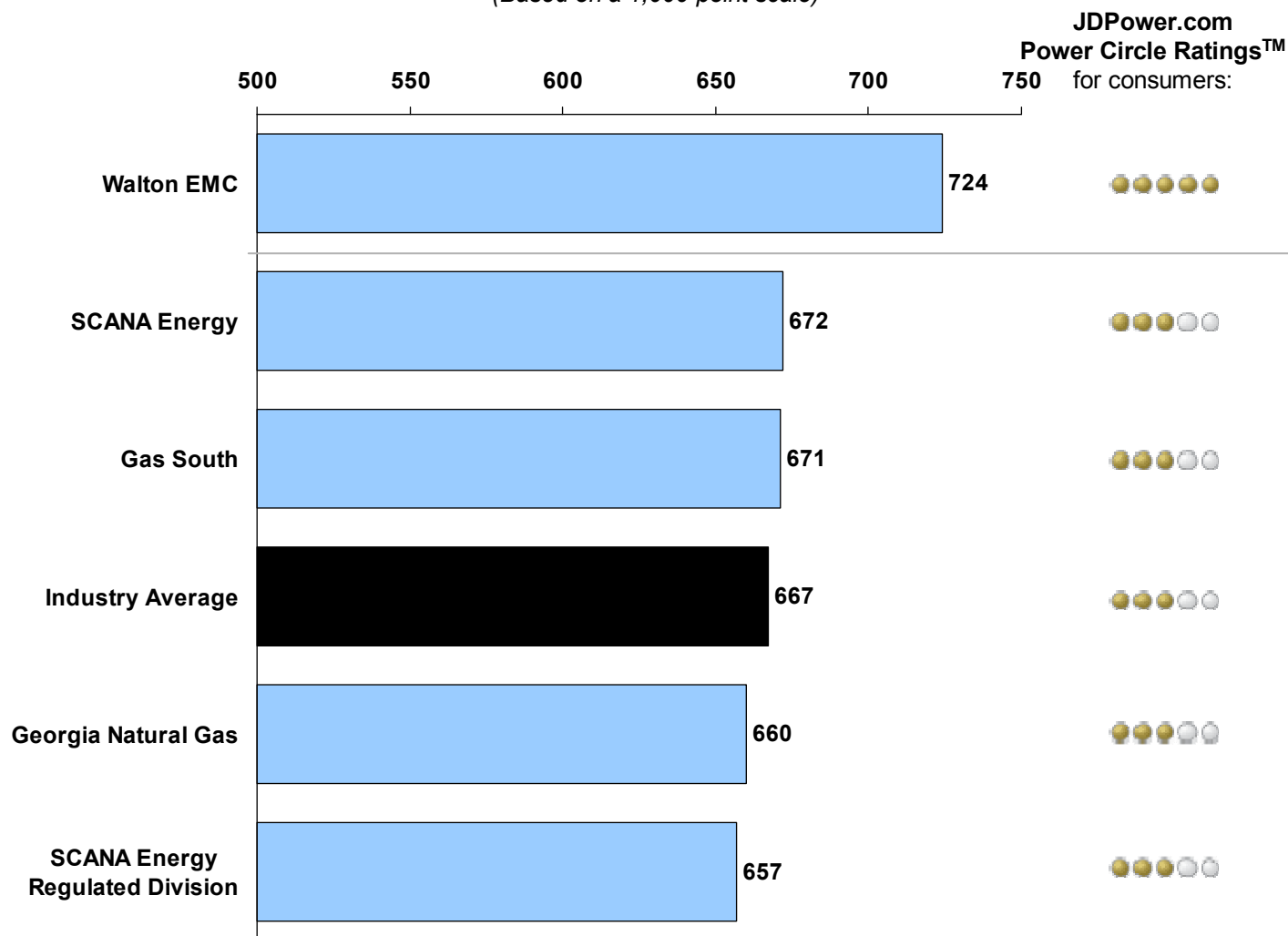
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NOTE: One chart follows.

J.D. Power and Associates 2011 Georgia Retail Gas Provider Customer Satisfaction StudySM

Customer Satisfaction Index Ranking

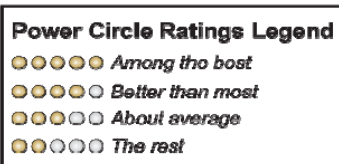
(Based on a 1,000-point scale)



Included in the study, but not ranked due to small sample size are:
Coweta-Fayette EMC, Fireside Natural Gas, Infinite Energy, MX Energy
and Stream Energy.

SCANA Energy is ranked separately from SCANA Energy Regulated
Division. The SCANA Energy Regulated Division provides natural gas
service to low-income and elderly customers and to individuals whose
credit histories prohibit them from obtaining service from other gas
retailers.

Source: J.D. Power and Associates 2011 Georgia Retail Gas Provider
Customer Satisfaction StudySM



Charts and graphs extracted from this press release must be accompanied by a statement identifying J.D. Power and Associates as the publisher and the J.D. Power and Associates 2011 Georgia Retail Gas Provider Customer Satisfaction StudySM as the source. Rankings are based on numerical scores, and not necessarily on statistical significance. JDPower.com Power Circle RatingsTM are derived from consumer ratings in J.D. Power studies. For more information on Power Circle Ratings, visit jdpower.com/faqs. No advertising or other promotional use can be made of the information in this release or J.D. Power and Associates survey results without the express prior written consent of J.D. Power and Associates.