

(b) (1) The Commission shall evaluate the cost-effectiveness of the investments by electric companies in energy conservation to reduce electrical demand and in renewable energy sources to help meet electrical demand.

(2) The evaluation of investments shall include:

(i) the electric companies' promotion and conduct of a building audit and weatherization program, including low-interest or no-interest electric company financing for the installation of energy conservation materials and renewable energy devices;

(ii) utilization of renewable energy sources;

(iii) promotion and utilization of electricity from cogeneration and wastes; and

(iv) widespread public promotion of energy conservation programs.

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(a) (1) The Commission shall:

(i) impose an environmental surcharge per kilowatt hour of electricity distributed to retail electric customers within the State; and

(ii) authorize each electric company to add the full amount of the surcharge to its customers' bills.

(2) To the extent that an electric company fails to collect the surcharge from its customers, the amount uncollected shall be deemed a cost of power distribution and allowed and computed as such together with other allowable expenses for purposes of rate-making.

(b) (1) The Comptroller shall collect the revenue from the surcharge imposed under subsection (a) of this section and place the revenue into a special fund, the Environmental Trust Fund.

(2) The Comptroller shall maintain the method of collection of the surcharge from each electric company, and the money collected shall accrue to the Fund.

(c) (1) Each fiscal year, the Secretary of Natural Resources shall coordinate the preparation of the annual budget required to carry out the provisions of the Power Plant Research Program under Title 3, Subtitle 3 of the Natural Resources Article.

(2) Each fiscal year, on approval of the annual budget by the General Assembly for the Power Plant Research Program, the Commission shall establish the amount of the environmental surcharge per kilowatt hour of electric energy distributed in the State that is to be imposed on each electric company in accordance with subsection (a) of this section.