

PSaveOnEnergy.com Content Manual and Style Guidelines: 3/12/19 (Note from Arthur – this is mostly correct, but some of it is a bit outdated).

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## I. Introduction

Save On Energy LLC started in 2003 by Brent Moore in Dallas to help Texas consumers take advantage of the newly deregulated electricity market. SaveOnEnergy.com combines the convenience of online capabilities with the numerous choices available from energy companies. In 2009, green energy plans were added to the site. In August 2012, Red Ventures acquired SaveOnEnergy. In October 2013, SaveOnEnergy Consulting started to deliver a new level of service to the largest commercial customers.

**Target markets:** SaveOnEnergy.com is active in areas with deregulated energy. These include California, Texas, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Maine. Texas is our largest market.

**Mission:** At SaveOnEnergy, our mission is to ensure consumers get the best energy information and products for their home or business.

**Vision:** SaveOnEnergy aims to be an informative, consumer-first energy services marketplace where the hassle and complexity of making energy decisions is removed.

## II. Content/Site overview

### a. Audience

**Need stats – mostly Texas**

### b. Voice and tone

SaveOnEnergy is *authoritative*. We are the energy experts.

SaveOnEnergy is *helpful*. We are here to help customers find an energy plan.

SaveOnEnergy is *trustworthy*. Our words are accurate and truthful – online and on the phone.

SaveOnEnergy is *conversational*. We use language our audience can easily understand.

Our tone may change depending on the type of content on the page, however, in general, our tone is trustworthy, friendly, informative and neutral. Blog posts and infographics will be more casual in voice, but strive to be authoritative and trustworthy with relevant, sourced facts. Company pages need to be neutral, whether we partner with the company or not, so we are fair to all companies. Social media posts can be more playful.

## III. Editorial content guide

### a. Company (supplier/utility) pages guidelines

**Supplier:**

## How to set up a supplier page

- Take a look at our other SOE company (supplier) pages to get an idea of the format: <https://www.saveonenergy.com/acacia-energy/>
- Under the main title, include these 6 bullets, in this order. Don't substitute if you can't find something – just leave it out.
  - Headquarters: (spell out state name. example: Houston, Texas)
  - Founded: (year)
  - Subsidiary of (only if it applies)
  - Markets served: (or if it's only one state, Market served)
  - A sentence with link to community involvement page. (use period at the end because it will be a complete sentence)
  - A sentence with link to in the news section. (use period at the end because it will be a complete sentence)

## Topic Ideas

- Create a template of 3-4 topics to talk about. Also, check your content map for any important or helpful resources. Here are some good ideas:
  - **Company overview and history**
    - § The usual facts – year founded, awards, number of customers, etc.
    - § Any claims to fame.
  - **Partnerships with charities or other organizations; community involvement**
  - **Business energy plans**
  - **Renewable energy plans**

- **Interesting products or services**

- § Thermostats, energy-saving products, paperless billing, rewards programs, refer-a-friend programs, etc.

- **Retail supplier vs. Utility company (what's the difference?) (this is more general, not company specific)**

- § Who to contact in case of an emergency (utility for outages and damaged wires, poles and pipes.)

- § Retailer supplies you with an energy plan, but utility delivers it safely to your home or business.

- § Storm safety

- **How to compare energy offers (this is more general, not necessarily company specific)**

- § Variable rates vs. price-protected/fixed rates

- § How different consumers shop for different things

- **Anything else you think is important to tell the consumer!**

- At the end of your page under a separate headline, always include a **Call to Action (CTA)**. It could be as short as 1-2 sentences. It should drive the consumer to call or enroll online so we can get the sale.

- Example: "If you're unsure of what energy plan is the best fit for your consumption needs, call [SaveOnEnergy.com](http://SaveOnEnergy.com) today! An energy representative will discuss plans in your area and help determine what's best for your situation."

- Add Updated date at end with period. Use this format for dates: Updated: 6-19-17.

- Above the H1, make sure this sentence appears, if it's not a partner:

SaveOnEnergy.com® is not affiliated with [company name].

- You want at least half the page to talk about the company rather than general information that could apply to any company. Don't talk about how deregulation works, energy-saving tips, common energy terms or recycling – the information needs to be very relevant, not general.

### **Utility:**

Write about similar topics as retailers: company history, service area, community outreach programs/energy-saving programs, calling the utility rather than supplier for a power outage.

At the end, add these bullets:

- **Areas served:** (or Area if just one. State or region within state)
- **Gas leak number:** (if there's a different number for electric, include both. Use this format for phone numbers:1-800-634-4300)
- **Power outage number:** 1-800-543-5599
- **News and safety:** (link to news page, such as [Read here](#))
- **Community involvement:** (link to relevant page)

### **Neutral writing tips:**

For company pages, keep your writing neutral rather than transactional. Some tips:

- Don't be as conversational as you would in transactional copy.
  - For example, "You can save up to 20% on your electricity bill when you get a solar lease from Sunrun." BECOMES "Sunrun advertises that it can save homeowners up to 20% on their electricity bill when they lease solar panels from the company."
- Don't use "you" when talking about competitors. It helps people imagine themselves going with that company, and that's not what we want! Instead use "the customer," "the

consumer," "the homeowner," etc.

- Be in the judgment-free zone. You're sharing facts, which are neither good nor bad. Even if the fact you're sharing is obviously one or the other, you don't speak to that. Just deliver the vanilla-y facts.
  - For example, Stream uses a pyramid-type scheme to recruit sales reps, who are then paid to recruit more sales reps in addition to the small commission they get on each new customer they sign. But we don't talk about that when describing the business model on SOE. We frame it in terms of customer recruiting through Stream's marketing arm, The Ignite Opportunity. We wouldn't have mentioned it at all except for the fact that "Ignite Energy" was a KW for the Stream pages. It's also worth noting here that "Ignite Energy" is not the company name, so "energy" had to be lower case.

## **b. City pages:**

- You want a few facts about the city so that both Google and residents know we're talking about that specific city. These can be in one graph or sprinkled throughout. Ideas to help localize: names of neighborhoods, universities, parks, landmarks, sports teams; population stats; when/how founded; awards.
- It's best to have a keyword or key idea in the first paragraph (first sentence is best), so the whole first graph shouldn't be just about the city.
- Look for any eco-friendly practices/programs by the city to include.

## **c. Blog posts**

- One of four categories: energy-saving tips (tips focused, use today type of information), green energy (general eco-friendly topics, can be useful or informational), energy news (developments in the energy/renewables fields), industry news (energy companies/utility/regulations, etc). (categories/sub-categories will change with Learning Center redesign in Aug/Sept 2017)
- Post energy-savings tips and green energy, 1x/wk. Energy news as many Fridays as we can. Industry news on hold.
- Tone: we know how you feel, we want to help; conversational, helpful, trustworthy (facts sourced). Use contractions, questions, straightforward language.

- Length: 400-600 is typical; 300-800 for large majority.
- Easy to read, scannable. Use bullets, plenty of headings to guide reader.

#### **d. Data hub posts**

These are data-driven posts on SOE in a category not seen on the site (only by url, for now). We use them mainly for outreach purposes – news sites can use the data-heavy information as a resource. They take different sources of data to calculate a unique ranking/angle on a topic. Need to include a methodology section to explain how we got that ranking.

Examples: <https://www.saveonenergy.com/data-hub/top-green-universities/>

<https://www.saveonenergy.com/data-hub/green-transportation/>

Process: Work with outreach team on idea and best way to present for readers and links; outreach team will pull data and put it into chart form.

#### **e. Press release**

**First type:** When we write an article and ask a site to post it, they might ask us for a short press release written in the third-person (or in that site's voice) for them to post. Sometimes the release announces that the site was named one of SOE's top/best picks.

Example:

## **Infographic: Which States Care Most About the Environment**

People in different parts of the U.S. are naturally going to have different interests. But you would think there are some topics attractive to everyone; the weather, for example, what movies are playing at the theater, or even how to recycle certain items.



[SaveOnEnergy.com](http://www.saveonenergy.com) decided to take a look at who's searching Google for common environmental themes, such as "how to compost" or "solar power," to see which states are interested in which topics. The fact that California is tops in "electric cars" may not come as a surprise, but the state that comes in second might! Take a look at the [HYPERLINK "https://www.saveonenergy.com/which-states-care-about-the-planet/"](https://www.saveonenergy.com/which-states-care-about-the-planet/) infographic to find out Which States Care Most About the Environment.

**Second type:** SOE is making an announcement and putting out a release. Example:

## **K-8 Teachers Have the Opportunity to Earn a \$500 Grant for Their Classroom**

**Dallas, T.X.** – Through its second annual Teacher Grant, [HYPERLINK "https://www.saveonenergy.com/energy-saving-tips/green-grad-gifts/"](https://www.saveonenergy.com/energy-saving-tips/green-grad-gifts/) SaveOnEnergy.com® is highlighting lesson plans that teach elementary and middle school students about the importance of energy and the environment. The company is committed to helping others learn about energy through its Learning Center, an educational hub that includes sustainability, energy conservation and industry news resources. The second annual Teacher Grant is the latest way SaveOnEnergy.com is encouraging young people to learn about energy.

SaveOnEnergy.com will award six \$500 grants to be used toward classroom materials and activities. Grant recipients' lesson plans will be featured on the website for other teachers to utilize as resources for their own classrooms. Lesson plans can range in subject and creativity, as long as they meet the grant criteria and students are engaged and encouraged to learn about energy.

For more information and application details, visit:  
<https://www.saveonenergy.com/teacher-grant/>

About SaveOnEnergy.com: [HYPERLINK "https://www.saveonenergy.com/energy-saving-tips/green-grad-gifts/"](https://www.saveonenergy.com/energy-saving-tips/green-grad-gifts/) SaveOnEnergy.com is passionate in educating all ages about a variety of energy-related topics such as green energy, energy conservation,

energy safety and more. The company's Learning Center has helpful blog posts, infographics and videos that help consumers better understand the energy industry.

Media Contact:

[outreacher's information]

###

**About Us blurb:** If someone asks for a descriptor, here are examples for SOE and the Kids Learning Center.

About SaveOnEnergy.com: SaveOnEnergy.com is passionate about educating all ages about a variety of energy-related topics such as green energy, energy conservation, energy safety and more. The company's Learning Center has helpful blog posts, infographics and videos that help consumers better understand the energy industry.

About SaveOnEnergy.com's Kids Learning Center: SaveOnEnergy.com's Kids' Learning Center is a fun place for children, families and teachers to explore energy-related topics. The center, nicknamed Nico's Hideout, employs interactive guides, videos and more to teach topics such as how to save energy, how to live greener, electrical safety, recycling information and much more.

## f. Social media

Social media is an important part of SaveOnEnergy's relationship with customers. With a thoughtful strategy in place, we can use these social platforms to remind current customers of our brand, encourage interaction and reach new potential customers.

- We avoid political and religious topics with our posts on all platforms to ensure neutrality. Even if the post or article mentions energy, it is not worth associating our brand with one side of a controversial topic. For example, this may be a current news headline: *Obama Vetoes Keystone Pipeline Bill*. While this story is relevant to the energy industry, posting it on branded social media could anger current customers and dissuade future customers. Controversial subjects could also cause concern with our affiliate suppliers.
- Address/acknowledge comments on our posts/page as quickly as possible, hiding irrelevant or inappropriate comments, though not necessarily negative comments.

- Mostly post on Facebook with some on Twitter. We have LinkedIn, Google+ and Pinterest accounts, but haven't added to them in a long time.
- In addition to the 2-3 times/week posting of newly written posts, we also post Energy Tips, Energy Jokes, Energy Facts and similar short visuals. We also share other sites' energy news or green energy stories. Repost our own content if relevant, timely and we aren't writing anything new on the topic.

Example of visual:

### Facebook demographics:

Facebook paid content strategy: Boost one post a week to a targeted demographic. Often test timing, demographic, type of post, etc.

## g. Contact Us forms

SaveOnEnergy.com has a Contact Us form where consumers can submit questions or concerns. We are the energy experts, therefore we reply in an authoritative response. We try to respond to all questions, regardless of the tone or intent of the consumer. However, we don't respond to SEO/outreach-related offers to increase our business. Here are some example questions we may receive from the Contact Us form and appropriate responses:

- I need to pay my bill/change my address/log into my account.  
*Thank you for contacting SaveOnEnergy.com, however you have contacted the wrong company. We are a marketplace that partners with several energy providers to offer energy plans, but we are not an energy provider ourselves. Please contact your provider directly to figure out how to ....*  
  
*Sincerely,  
The SaveOnEnergy Team*
- Your salesperson was rude/aggressive to me/This is a terrible plan.

o *Thank you for contacting SaveOnEnergy.com and thank you for your feedback. We want customers to have a good experience with us, so we take customer feedback seriously.*

*Thank you,  
The SaveOnEnergy Team*

· I can't find my provider on your site.

o *Thank you for contacting SaveOnEnergy.com. We work with a variety of retail providers, but not all providers in all markets. We don't work with your provider at this time, which is why you can't find it on our site.*

*Thank you,  
The SaveOnEnergy Team*

When responding, delete the names of who received the email as well as everything after the message. Also, change your return email address to your SOE address and change the TO to the receiver's email rather than the contact-us email address. Channel 5 is paid search; 13 is natural search.

## **h. Infographics**

We work with vendors to help create infographics – both the content and design are outsourced right now. Writers/editors review the infographics before they are finished/go live to make sure they are within our style/tone.

## **i. Meta titles**

Best Practices:

· **Check with your analyst to see what types of pages should have a phone number included.**

· Use keywords as close to the beginning as possible

· If you use phone number with competitor, make clear you can't get that company's products when you call ([CompanyName] | Want alternatives? Call

1-800 ...)

- On utility pages, "electricity provider" gets better response than "utility"
- "SaveOnEnergy.com ®" in copy is a winner.
- No two pages should have the same title or description
- Title not longer than 512 pixels (~60 characters)
- Description not longer than 923 pixels (~155 characters)

Can't say:

- Tired of [CompanyName]? or anything else that disparages a competitor.
- Shop now to save on energy rates (instead: Get a new rate)
- Reliant terms (Green Mountain, Cirro )

More info: <https://moz.com/learn/seo/title-tag>, <https://moz.com/learn/seo/meta-description>

#### **IV. Uploading to Wordpress (will change to Contentful with redesign)**

## **How to Put a Blog in the SOE**

# WordPress

IMPORTANT – CHECK WITH ARTHUR/CAITLIN FIRST. Some of this stuff is no longer correct, though in general it is right.

- **SOE WordPress URL:** <https://www.saveonenergy.com/blog/wp-admin/index.php>

(it is helpful to bookmark this)

- **Login:** SaveOnEnergyComBlog & Password is in LastPass

*Note: Adding a post to our WordPress while following best practices takes 13 steps total. To make things easier, everything is separated into sections.*

## Steps to add a new post and content:

**1. Select "add new"** under "posts" on the left hand nav.

**2. Copy/paste** the body of the blog (without the title) into the WordPress blog field under the "visual" tab, located on the right hand side. Look out for extra spacing between paragraphs and adjust accordingly.

**3. Copy/paste** the title into the title field.

- **Tip:** *If you copy paste the title into the body, when you delete it, the first*

*paragraph becomes a heading. This can be fixed but is just a pain.*

## **Selecting Categories and Adding Tags:**

- 4. Check the appropriate category** or categories on the right hand side (Example: **Green Energy**). Leave "featured" and other categories to the person in charge of scheduling so everything correlates with outreach and social initiatives.
  
- 5. Add appropriate tags.** Rather than doing them one at a time, you can separate each with a comma to get the same results (example: Green energy, Football stadiums, Energy efficiency...). Be sure to keep tags simple.
  
- 6. Give yourself authorship to become internet famous.** Below the content form there is a drop down to select the author of the post. If this is a post you don't want your name attached to, or a collaborative post, you can always select SaveOnEnergyTeam (our default).

## **Adding Images:**

- 7. Add a featured image.** You can find this section/link below the tags area on the right hand side in the post's WP interface. You will need to find an image through our BigStock account, or through Unsplash.com.

## **Follow these steps to find and add the image:**

- a. Search BigStock or Unsplash for an appropriate image** for the piece that is politically correct.

§ **Tip: For social**, *try to pick an image with a human face*

*and one that isn't overwhelming. The person scheduling social media will create a graphic with your chosen image with the SaveOnEnergy logo at the bottom.*

**b. Download the image only when you are sure it is the one you want.** We have a limited amount of credits per month with BigStock. However, you can download several photos with Unsplash.

**c. Optimize size with Canva.** The person in charge of creating social graphics will also be in charge of adding a watermark to the featured image. This process will ensure the image is the correct dimensions as well. Simply send over your image, and they will send it back fully optimized (jcraven@redventures.com **or** JCraven via Slack).

**d. Once you have optimized the image, click "add featured image"** in WordPress (located on the right hand side near tags) and upload the optimized version into the media library. Select the image for it to be the featured. It should then appear in the area where you clicked "add featured image."

## **All in One SEO Package**

**8. Below the author drop down, there is an "All in One SEO Package."** In this area, you will write your meta title and description. Make sure your meta is different from the actual title of the piece and description is appropriate.

**9. Click "Save Draft."** Once your piece is saved as a draft, you can refer to the Learning Center calendar to see when it should be set to publish. You can schedule yourself or have the person managing the blog do it for you.

○ **Tip:** *When you "Save Draft" there should be a small banner at the top of the post stating that the draft has been saved. If not, you should try again to be sure you didn't just lose your hard work.*

**10. Pat yourself on the back and give someone a high five.** Once you've successfully uploaded your content, send over your meta data from the "All



in One SEO," including your blog "category" to the person in charge of social. They will use this info to create a link and upload the correct meta to Facebook.

## V. Image guidelines

### a. Logo usage – need to get

## VI. Wordmark and trademark

### a. Legal usage:

- SaveOnEnergy.com®: Name of website is a registered trademark.
- Save On Energy LLC: Name of company founded by Brent Moore in 2003.
- May the best rate win®: Phrase for the business is a registered trademark. (We generally don't use this, but it is used a few times on site to preserve the trademark.)

### b. Use of name:

- Italicize *SaveOnEnergy.com* and use the registered trademark symbol ® (alt+ctl+R) after the first use on the page: *SaveOnEnergy.com*®
  - After the first reference, use *SaveOnEnergy.com* without the registered trademark.
  - Only use the registered trademarked reference on first use in body copy. Don't use in a headline or in display type (such as in a hero)
- Use *SaveOnEnergy.com* to refer to the website.
- Use SaveOnEnergy – one word with capital S, O and E – when referring to the team or company, rather than the website (when you should use the .com).
- Save On Energy LLC is the business Brent Moore founded in 2003. Three separate

words with LLC after it. This is the only instance where three separate words should be used. Otherwise, use SaveOnEnergy as one word.

## **VII. Writing tips:**

### **SEO writing tips:**

- Make sure you understand the purpose of the page before you start writing. What do we want readers to get out of this? What action do we want them to take? What questions will they be asking? All this helps determine what you write. How will we measure success?
- No duplicate content. Google can pick up as little as four words repeated from page to page. Even though we're writing much the same content from page to page, the wording **MUST** be different. Be careful that headlines are different, explanations of common terms are different, calls to action sentences are different.
- Use a keyword in the first sentence of the first paragraph, if possible, but at least the first paragraph.
- Use keywords in headlines – all headlines if you can, but especially in H1
- Get keyword toward front of headline as often as possible but vary placement
- Don't go keyword crazy! Synonyms can work for Google as well as the actual keyword.

### **Energy writing tips:**

- Common hyphenated words: fixed-rate plans, variable-rate plans (but these are not hyphenated when not a compound modifier), energy-saving tips
- Retail electric provider – not electrical or energy. Avoid REP.
- Use "serves" rather than "services"

- "Supply" rates/plans whenever possible
- In general, don't use the word "deregulation" – call it something else, such as energy choice, energy restructuring (Ohio), in an area where you can choose your own energy plan, etc.
- Don't use the term "partner" as a noun to refer to the companies we work with. Call them providers (in Texas only), affiliates, suppliers, preferred suppliers, etc.
- Avoid saying or implying we can save customers money with a new plan. **(may change if we can prove it post-JE)**
- Avoid absolutes. Use "may" or "can" instead of "will."
- Write neutrally about companies on company pages. We want to provide similar information and a fair tone for all, whether partner or competitor. Don't talk negatively about utilities.
- Distinguish between a supplier and utility.
- Explain deregulation and green energy products in plain terms.
- Generally follow AP style for punctuation, capitalization, numbers, etc.

### **Energy research tips:**

- When researching a new/unfamiliar company or market, check out that state's public utility commission (PUC) and the company websites. The PUC will have a lot of good information to put what you find on the company site into context. Also, deregulation structures vary from state to state. Some are only partially deregulated.
- Use ZIP codes from different markets (utility areas) to research what kind of plans are available in each one. They can vary by utility area in the same state.

### **Good writing tips:**

- Lazy writing to avoid: "things," "great," "This means that"
- Follow AP style, including: no comma between company name and Inc. No capitalization of common names, such as renewable energy credit.
- It's redundant to say "such as" and "and more" in the same sentence: examples such as (or including) blah, blah, blah and more.
- Headline should be a sentence with a verb, not a label or fragment; secondary headlines can be more label-like if necessary
- Write in active voice, not passive. Use compelling, action-oriented verbs in headlines.