

PSC: Urges consumers to seek assistance before moratorium on utility disconnections end

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MADISON – The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) urges electric, natural gas, and water utility customers with outstanding bills to make payment arrangements or apply for financial assistance before the annual winter moratorium on disconnections for nonpayment expires on April 15, 2021. The action comes following a moratorium preventing utilities from disconnecting service for nonpayment during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

“Public health and safety is a top priority and was the primary reason the PSC issued a moratorium on utility disconnection during the worst part of the pandemic,” said PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq. “As Wisconsin continues to be a national leader in vaccine availability and distribution, and our state begins to reopen its doors, I continue to encourage all who are behind on their utility bills to seek the resources available before they are subject to disconnection of service.” To avoid disconnection, customers who have fallen behind on payments are encouraged first to contact their utility to set up a payment plan. If customers are having difficulty paying their energy bills, they may be eligible for assistance from the Department of Administration’s Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP). Due to the pandemic, WHEAP income eligibility is based only on the previous month’s income. Throughout the pandemic, the PSC has worked closely with state partners to ensure energy assistance and crisis funding availability, including:

- An additional \$8 million in Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) crisis funds provided through the federal CARES Act.
- More than \$322 million in Wisconsin Emergency Rental Assistance Program funds provided through the 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act and administered by the Department of Administration.

- The 2021 American Rescue Plan Act, administered through the U.S. Department of Treasury will provide Wisconsin with an additional infusion of LIHEAP funds to its WHEAP program, along with additional emergency rental, utility bill, water bill, and homeowner assistance.

To learn more about these programs or apply for assistance, visit energybenefit.wi.gov or call 1-800-506-5596, or go to <http://homeenergyplus.wi.gov> to find out where to apply in person or call 1-866-HEATWIS.

Utilities are required to offer Deferred Payment Agreements (DPA) to residential customers who cannot pay an outstanding bill in full. Municipal utilities are not required to offer DPAs to tenants, but many still do so. If customers cannot reach a payment agreement with their utility, they may contact the PSC by calling 1-800-225-7729, or by [filing a complaint on the PSC website](#).

Throughout the summer and early fall of 2020, the PSC met several times to review the status of the pandemic and its March 2020 decisions. In October 2020, on a 2-1 vote, in order to protect public health and safety, the PSC extended the disconnection moratorium for residential utility customers through the end of the annual winter moratorium, which runs from November 1 through April 15. On March 18, 2021, the PSC voted unanimously to allow utilities to move forward with disconnection of service for nonpayment after the winter moratorium ends on April 15, but not before utility disconnection plans are submitted to the PSC.

For more information about utility disconnections and collections, see the [PSC's fact sheet on residential customer rights](#).