

CUSTOMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO AVOID SHUTOFF OF ELECTRIC SERVICE FOR NONPAYMENT

1. What can I do if I receive a notice from the utility that says my service will be shut off because I have a past due bill?

- Pay the bill in full; or
- Enter into a reasonable payment plan with the utility (see #2 below); or
- Apply for and become eligible for low-income energy assistance (see #3 below); or
- Give the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility a written statement from a doctor or public health official stating that shutting off your electric service would pose an especial health danger for a person living at the residence (see #4 below); or
- Tell the utility if you think part of the amount shown on the bill is wrong. However, you must still pay the part of the bill you agree you owe the utility (see #5 below).

2. How do I go about making a reasonable payment plan? (Residential customers only)

- Contact the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility as soon as you know you cannot pay the amount you owe. If you cannot pay all the money you owe at one time, the utility shall offer you a payment plan that spreads payments evenly over at least 12 months. The plan may be longer depending on your financial situation.
- If you have not made the payments you promised in a previous payment plan with the utility and still owe money, you may qualify for a second payment agreement under certain conditions.
- If you do not make the payments you promise, the utility may shut off your electric service on one day's notice unless all the money you owe the utility is paid or you enter into another payment agreement.

3. How do I apply for low-income energy assistance? (Residential customers only)

- Applications are taken at your local community action agency. If you are unsure where to apply, dial 2-1-1 or 1-800-244-7431, or visit humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa. To prevent disconnection, you must contact the utility prior to disconnection of your service.
- To avoid disconnection, you must apply for energy assistance or weatherization before your service is shut off. Notify your utility that you may be eligible and have applied for energy assistance. Once your service has been disconnected, it will not be reconnected based on approval for energy assistance.
- Being certified eligible for energy assistance will prevent your service from being disconnected from November 1 through April 1.

4. What if someone living at the residence has a serious health condition? (Residential customers only)

Contact the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility if you believe this is the case. Contact your doctor or a public health official and ask the doctor or health official to contact the utility and state that shutting off your electric service would pose an especial health danger for a person living at your residence. The doctor or public health official must provide a written statement to the electric cooperative's or municipal electric utility's office within five days of when your doctor or public health official notifies the utility of the health condition; otherwise, your electric service may be shut off. If the utility receives this written statement, your service will not be shut off for 30 days. This 30-day delay is to allow you time to arrange payment of your utility bill or find other living arrangements. After 30 days, your service may be shut off if payment arrangements have not been made.

5. What should I do if I believe my bill is not correct?

You may dispute your bill. You must tell the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility that you dispute the bill. You must pay the part of the bill you think is correct. If you do this, the utility will not shut off your service for 45 days from the date the bill was mailed while you and the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility work out the dispute over the part of the bill you think is incorrect. You may ask the Iowa Utilities Board for assistance in resolving the dispute (see #9 below).

6. When can the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility shut off my electric service because I have not paid my bill?

- Your electric cooperative or municipal electric utility can shut off service between the hours of 6 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- The electric cooperative or municipal electric utility will not shut off your service on nights, weekends, or holidays for nonpayment of a bill.
- The electric cooperative or municipal electric utility will not shut off your service if you enter into a reasonable payment plan to pay the overdue amount (see #2 above).
- The electric cooperative or municipal electric utility will not shut off your service if the temperature is forecasted to be 20 degrees Fahrenheit or colder during the following 24-hour period, including the day your service is scheduled to be shut off.
- If you have qualified for low-income energy assistance, the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility cannot shut off your service from November 1 through April 1. However, you will still owe the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility for the service used during this time.
- The electric cooperative or municipal electric utility will not shut off your service if you have notified the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility that you dispute a portion of your bill and you pay the part of the bill that you agree is correct.
- If one of the heads of household is a service member deployed for military service, electric service cannot be shut off during the deployment or within 90 days after the end of deployment. In order for this exception to disconnection to apply, the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility must be informed of the deployment prior to disconnection. However, you will still owe the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility for service used during this time.

7. How will I be told the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility is going to shut off my service?

- You must be given a written notice at least 12 days before the electric service can be shut off for nonpayment. This notice will include the reason for shutting off your service.
- If you have not made payments required by an agreed-upon payment plan, your service may be disconnected with only one day's notice.
- The electric cooperative or municipal electric utility must also try to reach you by telephone or in person before it shuts off your service. From November 1 through April 1, if the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility cannot reach you by telephone or in person, the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility will put a written notice on the door of or another conspicuous place at your residence to tell you that your electric service will be shut off.

8. If service is shut off, when will it be turned back on?

- The electric cooperative or municipal electric utility will turn your service back on if you pay the whole amount you owe.
- If you make your payment during regular business hours, or by 7 p.m. for electric cooperatives or municipal electric utilities permitting such payment or other arrangements after regular business hours, the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility must make a reasonable effort to turn your service back on that day. If service cannot reasonably be turned on that same day, the utility must do it by 11 a.m. the next day.
- The electric cooperative or municipal electric utility may charge you a fee to turn your service back on. Those fees may be higher in the evening or on weekends, so you may ask that your service be turned on during normal utility business hours.

9. Is there any other help available besides my electric cooperative or municipal electric utility?

If the electric cooperative or municipal electric utility has not been able to help you with your problem, you may contact the Iowa Utilities Board toll-free at 1-877-565-4450. You may also write the Iowa Utilities Board at 1375 E. Court Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0069, or by email at customer@iub.iowa.gov. Low-income customers may also be eligible for free legal assistance from Iowa Legal Aid and may contact Iowa Legal Aid at 1-800-532-1275.