PSC of WISCONSIN

Your Rights as a Residential Electric, Gas, or Water Utility Customer

Disconnections

A utility can disconnect your service for:

- Nonpayment
- Default on a deferred payment agreement
- Nonpayment of a deposit
- "Name switching" on an account where a customer did not pay their bill and continues to reside at that address
- Tampering with utility equipment
- Safety hazards or other emergencies
- Failure to provide access to a meter or utility-owned equipment

A utility must:

- Send you notice before disconnection (except where there is a safety hazard or self-reconnection)
- Include the reason(s) for disconnection, ways to contact the utility, and the dispute procedure on the notice

Winter Disconnection Rules

If a utility service provides the primary heat source to your home or impacts the primary heat source to your home (for example, water or steam radiators), a utility cannot disconnect that service from November 1st through April 15th. Before winter, the utility must attempt to contact customers whose service was disconnected for nonpayment. Utilities are also required to check the customer's well-being, attempt to negotiate payment plans, and inform the customer about any special assistance available to avoid disconnection.

Medical or Protective Services Emergencies

If a disconnection will aggravate a medical or protective services emergency, the utility may delay service shut-off for up to 21 days. The utility may require documentation from a professional involved with the medical emergency or crisis. Contact your utility about any such special circumstances.

Deposits

Utility companies may require a deposit for service to ensure payment. A standard deposit cannot exceed the sum of the two largest consecutive bills during the last twelve months. A deposit requested due to nonpayment during the winter months cannot exceed the four highest consecutive bills during the last twelve months. The following rules apply to payment and refund of deposits:

Existing Residential Customer

- Deposits can be requested if:
- your service was disconnected during the last 12 months for nonpayment of an undisputed account or your initial application was falsified or incomplete.

Winter Moratorium

- Deposits can be requested if:
- you had debt incurred during the winter (November 1st through April 15th) that was 80 days or more past due and you had the ability to pay.

New Residential Customer

- Deposits can be requested if:
- you have an unpaid bill for utility service anywhere in Wisconsin during the last six years which remains outstanding.

Low Income Customer

- You do not have to post a deposit if you can document that your income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Please contact your utility, Energy Assistance, or the PSCW for additional information on low income resources.

For residential service, the deposit will be refunded, with interest, after 12 consecutive months of prompt payment.

Budget Billing & Deferred Payment Agreements (DPA's)

To manage high winter gas bills or high summer electric bills, ask your utility about budget payment plans. This allows you to average estimated annual use into even monthly payments. Every six months, your payment amount is readjusted to reflect your actual use. At the end of a budget year, your bill is adjusted to correct over-billing or under-billing.

You may also request a deferred payment agreement (DPA) to pay a current or past due balance. A DPA consists of a down payment on the balance and installment payments toward the remaining balance negotiated between you and your utility depending on your situation. If the installment payments are not paid, the utility may disconnect your service. Municipal utilities may not be required to offer a DPA to some customers.

Delinquent Bills Levied as a Tax or Lien

Under state law, some delinquent municipal utility bills may be transferred as a tax to the property tax bill of the property owner or as a lien on tenant's personal assets.

Meter Readings

Generally, meter readings are based on actual meter readings by the utility or the customer. If a utility cannot read your meter, a customer does not provide a reading, or there is an emergency, you may receive an estimated bill. The PSCW requires electric and gas utilities to read your meter at least once every six months and when there is a change of customer. You must allow utilities to perform meter readings or your service can be disconnected.

What if you have a complaint?

If you have a dispute regarding electric, gas or water service, the PSCW can help:

Did you contact your utility to resolve the dispute?
- Both you and the utility must make reasonable attempts to resolve a dispute

No? • Contact the utility using its contact information included with the bill or notice

Yes? • You may contact PSCW Consumer Affairs to try to resolve the issue

Conservation & Moving

If you would like information on conservation or are expecting to move to another location, contact your utility. The utility can provide estimated energy costs at the new location, in the form of average energy used or the largest and smallest bills in the last twelve months. As another note on conservation, it is recommended that water heater thermostats be set no higher than 125° Fahrenheit.

For more information on conservation, go to FOCUSONENERGY.COM or call: 1-800-762-7077

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Partnering with Wisconsin utilities

About Us

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW) is an independent regulatory agency dedicated to serving the public interest. The agency is responsible for the regulation of Wisconsin public electric, gas and water utilities, including those that are municipally-owned, since 1907. The PSCW works to ensure that, in the absence of competition, adequate and reasonably priced service is provided to utility customers.

Contact Us

Phone (Local/Toll Free)

General: 608-266-5481 / 888-266-3831 Consumer Affairs: 608-266-2001 / 800-225-7729

Web

http://psc.wi.gov You can also Log a Complaint Online at: http://apps.psc.wi.gov/pages/complaint.htm

En la Comisión de Servicios Públicos del estado de Wisconsin (PSCW) podemos ayudarle en español. Cuando llame a la PSCW, simplemente indique que quisiera servicio en español, y conectaremos a un intérprete a la línea.

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