

Rights and Responsibilities To Avoid Disconnection

The following is a summary of your rights and responsibilities under the rules of the Iowa Utilities Commission to avoid disconnection of utility service.

Disconnection can be avoided by paying the past amount due or by making arrangements to pay the past due amount on or before the date listed on the notice.

Disconnection of service to a customer for nonpayment may occur only after we have sent a written notice of disconnection by regular mail postmarked at least twelve (12) days before service is to be shut off. This notice must include the reason for disconnection.

If you disagree with the accuracy of the utility bill, you may pay the undisputed portion and notify us of the disagreement. Disconnection will be delayed for up to forty-five (45) days from the date the bill was mailed so that the disagreement may be settled. If you file a written complaint with the Iowa Utilities Commission (1375 E. Court Avenue, Des Moines, IA 50319-0069, toll-free 1-877-565-4450), disconnection may be further postponed, should the Commission request the extension.

Iowa residential customers only

Disconnection for nonpayment may occur only after we have sent a written notice of disconnection by regular mail postmarked at least twelve (12) days before service is to be shut off. This notice must include the reason for disconnection.

We must try to contact you by phone or in person prior to disconnection. If disconnection is scheduled from November 1 through April 1, and it has not been possible to contact you by phone or in person, a notice must be placed on the door of the home at least one day before service is disconnected.

Questions & Answers about disconnection

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

- a. Pay the bill in full; or
- b. Enter into a reasonable payment plan with utility (see #2 below); or
- c. Apply for and become eligible for low income energy assistance (see #3 below); or
- d. Give the 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
- e. 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?

- a. Contact the 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 may offer you a payment plan that spreads payments evenly over at least 12 months. The plan may be longer depending on your financial situation.
- b. 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.

c. If you do not make the payments you promise, the utility may shut off your utility 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?

- a. Contact the local community action agency in your area (see attached list); or visit humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/where-apply.
- b. To avoid disconnection, you must apply for energy assistance 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.
- c. 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?

Contact the utility if you believe this is the case. Contact your doctor or public health official and ask the doctor or health official to contact the utility and state that shutting off your utility 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 utility office within 5 days of when your doctor or public health official notifies the utility of the health condition; otherwise, your utility 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 utility bill. You must tell the 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 utility work out the dispute over the part of the bill you think is incorrect. You may ask the Iowa Utilities Commission for assistance in resolving the dispute (see #9).

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

- a. Your utility can shut off service between the hours of 6 a.m. and 2 p.m. Monday through Friday.
- b. The utility will not shut off your service on nights, weekends, or holidays for nonpayment of a bill.
- c. The utility will not shut off your service if you enter into a reasonable payment plan to pay the overdue amount (see #2).
- d. The 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.
- e. If you have qualified for low-income energy assistance, the utility cannot shut off your service from November 1 through April 1. However, you will still owe the utility for the service used during this time.
- f. The utility will not shut off your service if you have notified the utility that you dispute a portion of your bill and you pay the part of the bill that you agree is correct.
- g. If one of the heads of household is a service member deployed for military service, utility service cannot be shut off during the deployment or within 90 days after the end of the deployment. For this exception to disconnection to apply, the utility must be informed of the deployment prior to disconnection. However, you still owe the utility for service used during this time.

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

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

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

- a. The utility will turn your service back on if you pay the whole amount you owe.
- b. If you make a payment during regular business hours, or by 7 p.m. for utilities permitting such payment or other arrangements after regular business hours the 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.
- c. The 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 utility?

If the utility has not been able to help you with your problem, you may contact the Iowa Utilities Commission toll free at 1-877-565-4450. You may also write the Iowa Utilities Commission at 1375 E. Court Avenue, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0069, or by e-mail at

customer@iuc.iowa.gov. Low income customers may also be eligible for free legal assistance from Iowa Legal Aid and may contact Legal Aid at 1-800-532-1275.

The following community action agencies are located in the Linn County REC service area:

HACAP Corporate Office
1515 Hawkeye Drive
Hiawatha, IA 52233
Phone: 319-393-7811

Waterfront Family Resource Center
367 Southgate Ave
Iowa City, IA 52241
Phone: 319-337-5765

Johnson County General Assistance
855 S. Dubuque St
Suite 202 B
Iowa City, IA 52240
Phone: 319-356-6090

Linn County General Assistance
1240 26th Ave Ct SW
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404
Phone: 319-892-5859

CommUnity Crisis Services & Food Bank
1121 S. Gilbert Ct
Iowa City, IA 52240
Phone: 319-351-2726