

Winter Disconnection

Indiana's Shut-Off Moratorium

Laws regarding utility service disconnection vary from state to state, including consumer protections during the winter heating season. The state of Indiana has a winter disconnection moratorium for consumers who qualify.

The Basics

Under Indiana Code 8-1-2-121, electric and natural gas utilities in Indiana may not disconnect a customer between December 1 and March 15 *if* the customer is:

- Receiving help from the federally funded Energy Assistance Program (EAP), or
- Qualified for EAP funds, has formally applied for the program at his or her local EAP intake office, and has provided the utility with written proof.

Disconnection can still happen under certain circumstances (such as an emergency, fraudulent use of services, or meter tampering).

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Does the moratorium apply to all electric and natural gas utilities in Indiana?

A. Yes. It applies to investor-owned and municipal utilities, as well as rural electric membership cooperatives (REMCs). However, it does not apply to providers of bulk fuels, such as propane. It also does not apply to water, sewage disposal, or telecommunications service providers.

Q. Does the moratorium waive the customer's responsibility to pay his or her bills?

A. No. While the moratorium is aimed at helping consumers stay connected to vital services during the year's coldest months, consumers are still responsible for paying their bills. Any customer who cannot pay a utility bill on time and in full should contact the utility immediately to make payment arrangements.

Q. What if I can't afford the entire amount due?

A. If you make payment arrangements with a utility and honor the agreement, your odds of being disconnected in the spring are dramatically lower. The OUCC strongly urges consumers who are covered by the moratorium to continue to pay heating bills through the winter, even if it is only a partial payment. A partial payment shows the utility that you are making a good-faith effort to keep your energy bill under control.

Q. Can a utility disconnect service if there are small children in the home?

A. Indiana law leaves these decisions entirely to the utility and its discretion. The only factors that qualify a consumer for the moratorium are whether a consumer receives or qualifies for EAP funds, as described above.

Q. Can disconnection be prevented if someone in the house has a serious health issue?

A. The utility must postpone a disconnection for 10 days if you provide a medical statement from a licensed doctor or a public health official. For more information, please see the OUCC's Utility Service Disconnection fact sheet.

Q. How important is it for me to communicate with my utility?

A. It's crucial. If you are covered by the moratorium and have an outstanding bill with spring approaching, it is important that you contact your utility to make arrangements and discuss what can be done to keep your service on.

Q. How do I find or contact my local intake office?

A. All Indiana counties have intake offices. In most counties, the office is the local Community Action Agency. To find your local intake office, contact the Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority (IHCDA) at 1-800-872-0371.

Q. Where else can I turn for financial help?

A. In all Indiana counties, you can learn more about local resources for utility bill assistance simply by dialing 211.

*This fact sheet is intended as a general overview and is not intended to serve as legal advice.
For more information on utility issues, subscribe to our monthly newsletter at IN.gov/OUCC/2877.htm*



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