

**12.** Can my electricity be shut off if I heat with propane or fuel oil?

If you make and keep your CWR payment plan, your electricity cannot be shut off if it affects your heat.

\* For example, if you use electricity to operate the controls on your oil system, your electricity cannot be shut off if you keep your payment plan.

In this case, the CWR covers only your electric service. The CWR does not cover propane and fuel oil companies

**13.** I am a renter and pay my own utility bill. Am I covered?

Yes, if the utility service affects the primary heat source of your residence.

**14.** What if I need help reading or understanding notices from my utility?

The CWR has a "Third Party Notice" option.

If you would like help applying for the CWR, you may arrange for another person to get a copy of any disconnection notices or other important information, at the same time you receive it.

This may be a friend, family member, or anyone who is willing to help you understand the notices or set up a CWR payment plan.

**15.** How do I sign up for Third Party Notices?

Call your utility for a sign-up form.

The form must be filled out and signed by both you and the person you want to be notified and mailed back to the utility.

**16.** Does the person who gets my Third Party Notices have to pay my bill if I don't?

No, the person who receives the Third Party Notices is not responsible for paying your bill. This person is only agreeing to help you with notices from your utility.

**17.** I need help paying my bill. Who do I call?

**Energy Assistance Hotline  
1-800-657-3710**

or  
**First Call For Help  
at  
211**

If you receive energy assistance, you may also be able to get help from:

- \* Gas Affordability Program
- \* Low Income Electric Discount

Call your utility for information.

**MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**  
121 Seventh Place East, Suite 350  
Saint Paul, MN 55101-2147

**CONSUMER ASSISTANCE**  
651-296-0406  
Toll Free: 1-800-657-3782  
Fax: 651-297-7073  
Email: [consumer.puc@state.mn.us](mailto:consumer.puc@state.mn.us)  
[www.puc.state.mn.us](http://www.puc.state.mn.us)

Concerned about paying your heating bills this winter?

Facing disconnection?

You may receive protection under Minnesota's

**COLD WEATHER RULE**

In effect October 15 through April 15

Information provided by the  
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

## 1. Can my heat be shut off in the winter?

YES, unless you take steps under the Cold Weather Rule (CWR) to protect yourself.

- ✓ You must contact your utility to apply for protection from having your heat shut off.
- ✓ This is true for all residential customers, including senior citizens and families with young children.

## 2. When is the Cold Weather Rule in effect?

From October 15 through April 15 each year.

## 3. Are all utilities covered?

All natural gas and electric utilities must follow some level of the CWR.

Delivered fuels, such as fuel oil, propane and wood, are not covered by the CWR.

If you need electricity to keep our heat on, you may apply for the CWR with your electric company.

## 4. What steps must utilities take before disconnecting my service?

Before the utility may turn off your service during the winter months (October 15 through April 15), the company must send you the following information:

- \* A disconnection notice telling you the date you may be disconnected
- \* Details on payment plans and how to avoid disconnection
- \* How to appeal if you and the utility can't agree on a payment plan
- \* A list of energy assistance and weatherization providers
- \* No-cost and low-cost methods of conserving energy
- \* A Third Party Notice Form

## 5. How can I keep my heat on?

You must make and keep a payment plan with your utility. The payments don't have to be the same amount each month.

If your household income is:

**At or below 50 percent** of the state median income,  
✓ You are not required to pay more than ten percent of your household monthly income.

**More than 50 percent** of the state median income,  
✓ You may make a payment plan with the utility.

## 6. How can I get reconnected if my heat is already shut off?

You must make and keep a payment plan with your utility. The payments don't have to be the same amount each month.

If your household income is:

**At or below 50 percent** of the state median income,  
✓ You are not required to pay more than ten percent of your household monthly income.

**More than 50 percent** of the state median income,  
✓ You may make a payment plan with the utility.

## 7. How do I apply for the Cold Weather Rule?

Contact your utility to set up a Cold Weather Rule payment plan.

## 8. What happens after I apply?

If you make and keep a Cold Weather Rule payment plan, you are protected.

If you and the utility cannot agree on a payment plan, you have ten days to appeal to the Public Utilities Commission.

The Commission will help you set up a payment plan.

Your service will stay on during the appeal process.

## 9. How long will my payment plan last?

Most payment plans under the CWR last until April 15 unless you make other arrangements with the utility.

- ✓ Call your utility before April 15 to make a new payment plan so your account will be current at the start of the next heating season.

## 10. What happens to my utility service after April 15?

As long as you make and keep a new payment plan, you will have service.

- ✓ If you do not keep your payment plan and you have a past-due balance on April 15, your service could be shut off.

## 11. What happens if I can't make my payments as planned?

If you can't make your payments, call your utility *immediately* to make a new CWR payment plan.

- ✓ *If you do not make your payments, your service may be shut off.*