



COLD WEATHER RULE

The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule (CWR) is designed to protect people who may have trouble paying their utility bills in winter. The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule applies from October 1st to April 30th. The rule, established by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, means that your utility cannot disconnect your residential electric, natural gas, or water service during the winter if the customer meets the following requirements:

- (1) utility disconnection would affect the customer's primary heat source;
- (2) the customer has declared inability to pay on forms provided by the utility

(Note: Customers receiving "any form of public assistance" including energy assistance, are deemed to have qualified for inability to pay status);

- (3) the household income of the customer is less than 50 percent of the state median income level, as documented by the customer to the utility; and
- (4) the customer's account is current for the billing period immediately prior to October 15 or the customer has entered into a payment schedule and is reasonably current with payments under the schedule.

If this provision applies to you, **it is your responsibility to notify the City of this fact immediately.** You can do this by coming to the office at 310 Chestnut Avenue or by calling 218-384-4229. Office hours are Monday through Friday from 8:00am to 4:00 pm.

Please be advised that if you claim protection from termination under this rule, the City reserves the right to inspect your heating system to verify that the disconnection would affect your primary heating source and you must cooperate by allowing the City of make the inspection.

You must also establish and keep a payment plan to avoid disconnection.

CWR protection ends on April 30. If you still owe on your bill on April 30, you may ask to continue your payment plan.

CUSTOMER RIGHTS

Under the Cold Weather Rule (Minn. Stat. 216B.097), Minnesotans have the right not to have their utility service disconnected and to have it reconnected from October 15 to April 15 if it affects the primary heat source of their residence and their total household income is at or below 50 percent of the state median household income. If a customer does not meet the responsibilities outlined below, utility service may still be discontinued. If a customer disputes the utility's decision to disconnect, the customer has the right to contact the utility and appeal the decision through the utility's established appeal procedure.

If service is to be disconnected, the disconnection must not occur:

1. on a Friday, unless that day the customer declines to enter into a payment agreement offered by the utility in person or via personal contact by telephone;
2. on a weekend, holiday, or day before a holiday;
3. when utility offices are closed;
4. after the close of business, unless a field representative of the utility who is authorized to enter into a payment agreement, accept payment, and continue service, offers a payment agreement to the customer; or
5. until at least 20 days after the disconnection notice has been mailed to the customer or 15 days after the notice has been personally delivered to the customer.

CUSTOMER RESPONSIBILITIES

In order to have the rights stated above, a customer must do the following:

1. Provide the utility with information to verify that the customer meets the income eligibility requirement. The utility may ask the customer to fill out a form or simply ask if the customer receives any form of public assistance that requires recipients to have income at or below 50% of the state median household income.
2. Contact the utility and come to a mutually agreeable schedule for making monthly payments toward utility bills. The agreement must consider the financial resources of the household.
3. Continuously make the payments required under the agreement. Payments must be made in a reasonable and timely manner. If financial circumstances change and the customer cannot make scheduled payments, the customer must notify the utility of the need to make changes to the agreement.

COLD WEATHER RULE - FAQs

Can my heat/water be shut off in the Winter? YES.

You must make and keep a Cold Weather Rule payment plan with your utility company to receive Cold Weather Rule (CWR) protection between October 1 and April 30.

This is true for all residential customers, including senior citizens and families with young children.

Payment plans can be established at any time during the CWR season.

If the payment plan is broken the utility company is not required to offer additional arrangements.

If you are unable to agree on a payment amount, you request an appeal from your utility.

How do I sign up?

Contact your utility company and request a CWR payment plan.

Payment plans can be established at anytime during the CWR season. If the payment plan is broken the utility is not required to offer additional arrangements.

If you are unable to agree on a payment amount, you have the right to appeal with your utility.

After you sign up

Once you make and keep a CWR payment plan, the utility will turn on your service. As long as you make your payments, you are protected until April 30.

Appeals

If you and the utility cannot agree on a payment plan, you can request and appeal from your utility

You have ten days to submit your appeal to the Commission.

The Commission will help you set up a payment plan.

Your service will stay on during the appeal process.

Utility Requirements

Before disconnecting service between October 1 and April 30, the utility company must provide you with:

- Notice of disconnection.

- Payment plan options to stop a disconnection.

- Appeal rights if you and the utility cannot agree on a payment plan.

- A list of local energy assistance and weatherization providers.

- A list of no-cost and low-cost methods to conserve energy.

- A Third Party Notice form.

What if I can't make my scheduled payment?

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.

Help reading and understanding notices

If you have trouble with utility bills and notices, fill out a Third Party Notice form and the utility will send copies to the person you choose so you don't miss important dates.

The Third Party is not responsible for paying any bills.

Help paying bills

Carlton County Human Services 218-879-4511

Energy Assistance Hot Line 1-800-657-3710

The Salvation Army HeatShare 1-800-842-7279

First Call for Help Dial 211

Find Water Savings Tips:

<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/conserving-water>

https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/waters/watermgmt_section/appropriations/water-conservation-residents.html