



Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

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KEEP UTILITIES ON WITH A MEDICAL CERTIFICATION WAIVER

If you have a health condition that would be affected by a shut off of utilities, you should take the time to communicate with your doctors to assure your health is not put at risk. Planning ahead and communicating special needs are key.

State law prevents utilities from disconnecting a consumer's electric and natural gas services for nonpayment if a permanent member of the household has a medical condition defined as "especially dangerous" to health and the consumer has a medical certification waiver on file to that effect with the utility company.

In some cases, electric companies can give preference to individuals who rely on life support devices, such as respirators, ventilators or other medical equipment. There is no guarantee, however, these customers will receive power immediately so they should always have a backup plan in place.

Contact your utility company about your medical needs before you face a disconnection or power outage during a storm or other event that might disrupt your utility service.

Medical certifications

Medical certifications can be used to prevent a utility disconnection up to three times during a 12-month period or to reconnect service if the customer



has been disconnected for no more than 21 days. Certification forms must be completed for each case of disconnection or reconnection. The waiver is valid for 30 days and forms are available from the utility.

The certification must be signed by a licensed physician, physician assistant, clinical nurse specialist, certified nurse practitioner, certified nurse-midwife or a local board of health physician. Generally, the medical personnel fax or mail the completed form to the utility company.

If a medical certification is received prior to 3:30 p.m., service will be

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The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at www.pickocc.org.



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restored the same day if it has been disconnected. If it is received after 3:30 p.m., service will be restored at the earliest time possible the following day. If the medical certification is received after 3:30 p.m. on a day that precedes a non-business day, the utility will make every effort to restore service by the end of the day.

The responsibility for determining whether a condition warrants a medical certification lies exclusively with the medical professional – not the utility or the Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC). This determination is made by the doctor consulting with the patient. There are no income guidelines associated with the use of a medical certification waiver. The waiver can be used for either electric or natural gas utilities or both. Investor-owned water companies also offer medical certification waivers. For more details contact the OCC.

Payment Plans

Medical certifications can postpone a disconnection, but customers are still ultimately required to pay for electric and/or natural gas services, even those they were charged for while the medical certification was in effect.

Consumers with a medical condition who also are experiencing difficulty paying their utility bills have options available to them other than a medical certification. For income eligible consumers, these include PIPP Plus (Percentage of Income Payment Plan), Emergency Home Energy Assistance Program (E-HEAP) and the annual Winter Reconnect Order issued by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio.

For all customers, the utilities are required to offer alternative payment plans. The OCC or local community action agencies can help establish payment arrangements between the consumer and the utility company.

Missed PIPP Plus payments must be made as part of the annual verification process to stay on PIPP Plus. Consumers who use a medical certification must pay any missed payments to remain on the PIPP Plus program. Also, a PIPP Plus customer does not receive credit on current or historic arrearages when using a medical certification.

Contact the utilities:

American Electric Power
1-800-272-2177

Columbia Gas of Ohio
1-800-344-4077

Dayton Power & Light
1-800-433-8500

Dominion East Ohio
1-800-362-7557

Duke Energy Ohio
1-800-648-7777

FirstEnergy

Cleveland Electric Illuminating
1-800-589-3101

Ohio Edison
1-800-633-4766

Toledo Edison
1-800-477-3333

Vectren Energy Delivery
1-800-227-1376