

Know Your Rights: Regulated Utilities



Electric: Duquesne, Met-Ed, PECO Electric, Penelec, Penn Power, PPL, West Penn

Heat: Columbia, NFG, PECO Gas, Peoples, PGW, UGI

Water: Aqua, PA American, PWSA, Suez

This information is intended to provide general information about utility rights to Pennsylvanians impacted by the Coronavirus (COVID-19). This information is up to date as of November 19th, 2020.

Each situation is different. For advice about your case, contact PULP's utility hotline at 844-645-2500.

Can my service be shut off during the pandemic if I am behind on my bill?

Regulated utilities may shut you off as of November 9th, 2020.

You must always receive a written termination notice at least 10 days before being shut off.

Due to the pandemic, you may also receive an additional written notice before the 10-day notice is issued. If you do, contact your utility company immediately.

Your utility must also try to contact you 72 hours prior to termination, either by phone, in person, or by email.

If your household income is at or below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (see chart on the last page), you will automatically be protected from termination between December 1st, 2020 and March 31st, 2021.

If your household income is at or below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level (see chart on the last page), you will be protected from termination until March 31st, 2021 if you apply for all available assistance programs and request a payment arrangement.

Where can I get help to avoid termination or to be reconnected?

- First, contact your utility, apply for assistance, and/or request a payment arrangement
- Contact your local legal aid office or PULP's Utility Hotline at 844-645-2500
- Call the Public Utility Commission to file an informal complaint at 1-800-692-7380

What if my landlord stopped paying the bill, or requested that service be shut off?

Tenants have a right to continue service, even if their landlord stops paying or requests service be shut off to a tenant's property. **Contact your local legal service program or PULP if your service is shut off based on your landlord's actions.**

What if I have a medical condition?

You can submit a medical certificate from your doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant to prevent termination for up to 30 days if you or a household member has a serious illness or if service is required to treat your condition. You may submit at least two additional medical certificates after the first if you continue to be at risk of termination.

Additional protections are also available for victims of domestic violence with a Protection from Abuse Order or other court order demonstrating that they are a victim.

Having trouble paying your bills?

First, always try to pay what you can when you can. This shows a “good faith effort” to pay. Then, contact your utility company to ask if there are programs to help.

Customer Assistance Programs

- Eligibility: Income at or below 150% FPL (see chart on last page)
- Benefits: Discounted bill and possible debt forgiveness over time

LIHEAP

- Available from November 2nd, 2020 to April 9th, 2021
- Eligibility: Income at or below 150% FPL (see chart on last page)
- Benefits: Financial assistance to help pay for heat-related utility service, including gas, electric, or deliverable fuels (oil, wood, coal, or propane)
- Also helps to repair broken or inefficient heating systems
- Contact your local County Assistance Office to apply

Hardship Fund Programs

- Eligibility: Income at or below 200% FPL (see chart on last page)
- Benefits: Grant assistance

Payment Arrangements

- Ask your utility for a payment arrangement to pay the debt over time
- If your utility offers a payment arrangement that you cannot afford, ask for a lower amount - you may need to provide income information
- If your utility refuses to give you a payment arrangement, contact the Public Utility Commission

Energy Efficiency and Usage Reduction Assistance

- If you have high bills and a low income, you may be eligible for free energy efficiency and usage reduction measures to help reduce your monthly bills

Unregulated Utilities

Boroughs, municipal authorities, and co-ops are not regulated by the Public Utility Commission and have their own regulations.

Contact your local legal aid program or PULP for more information.

Phone or Broadband Internet Assistance

The Lifeline Program provides telephone and internet assistance to low income households.

If you are already enrolled, any recertification or reverification requirements deadlines are extended until February 28th, 2021. Visit

<https://www.lifelinesupport.org/how-to-get-lifeline/> for more information.

2020 Federal Poverty Limit Guidelines

<u>Number of Persons Living in Household</u>	<u>150% Annual Income Limit (AIL)</u>	<u>200% AIL</u>	<u>300% AIL</u>
1	\$19,140	\$25,520	\$38,280
2	\$25,860	\$34,480	\$51,720
3	\$32,580	\$43,440	\$65,160
4	\$39,300	\$52,400	\$78,600
5	\$46,020	\$61,360	\$92,040