

CUSTOMER RIGHTS & REMEDIES TO AVOID DISCONNECTION

The following is a summary of your rights and remedies under the rules of the Iowa State Commerce Commission to avoid disconnection of utility services.

Disconnection can be avoided by paying the past due amount or by making arrangements to pay on or before the date listed on the notice.

Disconnection for nonpayment may occur only after we have sent a written notice of disconnection by regular mail postmarked at least 12 days before service is to be shut off. This notice must include the reason for disconnection. We must try to contact you by phone or in person prior to disconnection. If disconnection is scheduled between November 1 and April 1 and it has not been possible to contact you by phone or in person, a notice must be placed on the door of the home at least one day before service is disconnected.

Disconnection may not take place unless we are prepared to reconnect your service that same day if payment or other arrangements are made. Between November 1 and April 1, we cannot require you to pay a deposit before service is reconnected or as part of an agreement for service to be continued.

Delinquent bill. If you are unable to pay a past due bill in full, you will be given an opportunity to enter into a payment agreement to avoid disconnection of service. The agreement will be negotiated to meet your individual needs and you may spread payments for the past due bill over at least twelve (12) months. You must also agree to pay each new monthly bill as it comes due. If we refuse an agreement, you will be told in writing why we refused, and you may continue to pay under your proposed agreement without disconnection of service if you ask the Board (within 10 days after receiving the written refusal) for assistance in working out an agreement with us. (Iowa State Utilities Board, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319, 515-281-5979). If you break the payment agreement, we are not required to offer you a second payment agreement and may disconnect service on one day's notice.

Health. Disconnection for nonpayment will be delayed 30 days if a physician or public health official determines that a permanent resident in your house has a serious health problem and will be endangered if service is shut off. At our request, a telephone call from the physician or public health official to our office must be followed up by a letter within five days. During the 30-day delay, you must work out a payment agreement. If the physician or health official states that the health problem still exists at the end of the initial 30 days, you may receive an additional 30 day delay.

Disputed bill. If you disagree with the accuracy of your bill, you may pay the undisputed portion and notify our office of the disagreement. Disconnection will be delayed up to 45 days from the date the bill was mailed so that the disagreement may be settled. If you file a written complaint with the board (address and telephone number listed previously), disconnection may be further postponed, should the board request the extension.

Winter energy assistance (November 1 through April 1). You may be eligible for low-income energy assistance or weatherization funds. If you tell us that you may qualify for energy assistance, you will be given 12 days from the date on which the disconnection notice was mailed to apply to the local community action agency. You must apply prior to the disconnection date. If the community action agency certifies you as being eligible for either low-income energy assistance or weatherization assistance within 30 days from the date of your application, then your service cannot be disconnected between November 1 and April 1.

It is unlikely, however, that energy assistance funds will pay all of your utility bills. It is to your advantage to make a payment arrangement now to avoid disconnection of your service after April 1.

If you have been certified as eligible for assistance, and you receive a disconnection notice from your gas or electric company, it is up to you to ensure that the utility is notified of your eligibility. Your certification will cover the current November 1 through April 1 period only. For further information on how to apply for assistance and qualifications, contact our business office, the Division of Community Action Agencies of the Department of Human Rights, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319 (1-800-532-1584), or your community action agency.

LOCAL AGENCIES

Upper Des Moines Opportunity	Spencer	712-262-7409
	Emmetsburg	712-859-3885
Department of Human Services	Spencer	712-262-3586
General Relief	Spencer	712-262-9438
Veteran's Affairs	Spencer	712-262-5547
Good Shepard Fund	Everly	834-2767
Hope Lutheran Church		
Good Samaritan Fund	Everly	834-2501
United Methodist Church		