

COLD WEATHER GUIDELINES

RPU's objective is to ensure that residential customer accounts are protected during the cold weather period and follow the requirements of Minnesota Statute 216B.097.

Minnesota Statute 216B.097 states that a municipal utility must not disconnect and must reconnect the utility service of a residential customer during the period between October 1 and April 30, if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit and all of the following conditions are met:

- 1) the household income is at or below 50 percent of the state median income. RPU may verify income on forms it provides or obtain verification of income from the local energy assistance provider. A customer is deemed to meet the income requirements of this clause if the customer receives any form of public assistance, including energy assistance, that uses an income eligibility threshold set at or below 50 percent of the state median household income;
- 2) the customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household. "Reasonably timely payment" means payment within five working days of agreed-upon due dates;
- 3) the customer receives referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills.

If the above conditions are not met, RPU can disconnect utility service(s) for non-payment during the cold weather period between October 1 and April 30. Before disconnecting a residential service, RPU will provide the following information to the customer:

- 1) a notice of proposed disconnection;
- 2) a statement explaining the customer's rights and responsibilities;
- 3) a list of local energy assistance providers;
- 4) a form on which to declare inability to pay; and
- 5) a statement explaining available time payment plans and other opportunities to secure continued utility service.

RPU is required to give notice of proposed disconnection to the local energy assistance provider and the Department of Commerce.

The application required for cold weather protection is available in this brochure.

If you have questions regarding these guidelines please contact RPU Customer Care at 507-280-1500 or visit www.rpu.org.

NOTICE OF RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Minnesota Legislature and Public Utilities Commission have issued the Cold Weather Rule. If a customer's account is current as of October 1, a utility must go through certain steps before disconnecting a customer's service. The rule applies October 1 through April 30.

The purpose of this notice is to inform you of your rights and responsibilities under the Cold Weather Rule. These rights and responsibilities are designed to help you with winter utility bills. You must act PROMPTLY. If you choose not to enter into a mutually acceptable payment schedule, your service may be disconnected.

Specifically, the Cold Weather Rule provides you with these options:

- **The Right** to declare your inability to pay your utility bill. If you do so, you must enter into a payment schedule with the utility to maintain your utility service. You have the right to appeal any proposed disconnection to your local utility. You will have to provide the utility proof that you are unable to pay and were current in payments to the utility. If you appeal a disconnection, your service will not be disconnected until the appeal is resolved. Appeals are resolved locally.
- **The Responsibility**, if you choose to declare inability to pay, to complete the Cold Weather Protection Application in this brochure and return it to the utility within 10 days. If you have proof that you are receiving any form of public assistance, you must also contact the utility to arrange a payment plan.
- **The Right** to a mutually acceptable payment schedule with the utility. This payment schedule will cover your existing arrears plus the estimated usage during the payment schedule period. If you are able to pay but still wish to enter into a payment schedule, contact the utility immediately to arrange a schedule. This payment schedule may be arranged by your designated third party.
- **The Responsibility** of making payments as agreed or promptly notifying the utility of why you cannot keep the agreement. You may then request that the original payment schedule be changed. Any change is initially subject to the utility's approval.
- **The Right** to request that the utility notify a third party if your service becomes subject to disconnection. If you have requested third party notification, a copy of this notice has been sent to the third party.

Disputes regarding the previously listed options can be appealed to your utility. Copies of the Cold Weather Rules are available at your local utility.



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www.rpu.org

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COLD WEATHER PROTECTION

What you should know about the Cold Weather Rule and winter utility bills.



COLD WEATHER PROTECTION APPLICATION

If you cannot pay your bill in full and need cold weather protection, fill out this form and return it immediately with your bill or visit the RPU Service Center.

Name

Account Number from RPU Bill

Service Address Apt #

City State Zip

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Primary Phone

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Work Phone

Total Amount You Owe \$ _____

Total # of Persons in Household _____

Total Annual Household Income \$ _____

Sources of Income

(check all that apply for your household):

- ☐ Employment
- ☐ GA Medical Care / Medical Assistance
- ☐ AFDC/GA
- ☐ I do not pay for any of my own medical expenses.
- ☐ Other (describe): _____

Please indicate if any of the following exists in your home (check all that apply):

- ☐ Medical Emergency
- ☐ Disabled Person in Residence

PAYMENT ARRANGEMENT:

I agree to the following payment arrangement and will bring my total account balance current by April 30:

\$ _____ by (date) _____.

\$ _____ by (date) _____.

\$ _____ by (date) _____.

\$ _____ by (date) _____.

\$ _____ by (date) _____.

\$ _____ by (date) _____.

By signing this form, I declare the above information is true and correct. I give my permission to any energy provider or public assistance agency that serves me to exchange income and billing information with other energy providers or public assistance agencies that serve my utility for the purpose of program qualification. **I understand failure to comply with the payment arrangement may result in disconnection.**

Customer Signature Date

COLD WEATHER RESOURCES

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Three Rivers Community Action • 800-277-8418 • www.threeriverscap.org

EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Olmsted County Family Support & Assistance • 507-328-6500

ENERGY CONSERVATION AND PROGRAMS

Rochester Public Utilities • 507-280-1500 • www.rpu.org

HOME ENERGY GUIDE

Minnesota Department of Commerce
mn.gov/commerce/energy/conserving-energy/home-energy-guide/

WEATHERIZATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Minnesota Department of Commerce
mn.gov/commerce/energy/consumer-assistance/wap/

THIRD PARTY NOTIFICATION REQUEST FORM

You may want to designate a third party (friend, relative, church group, or community agency) to be notified in the event that a disconnection notice is issued to you.

The third party will NOT be responsible to pay your bill, but will have the right to contact RPU and provide information or negotiate a payment arrangement on your behalf. If you want a third party to be notified of the potential disconnection, please complete this form.

THIRD PARTY INFORMATION:

Name

Address Apt #

City State Zip

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Primary Phone

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Work Phone

Third Party Signature* Date

By signing below, I acknowledge that RPU has my permission to provide information to and accept information from the party named above.

Customer Signature Date

**This request will not be accepted without the third party's signature. RPU will make every effort to notify the third party of proposed disconnection or need for financial assistance. The customer making this request understands that RPU assumes no liability should the third party fail to receive and/or act upon the notification.*