

Your Rights as a Residential Water Customer

Know your payment and disconnection rights as a water utility customer

How can the PSC help?

Prior to contacting the PSC, contact your utility company to try to resolve the problem. If you cannot resolve the problem with your utility company, you may contact the PSC Consumer Affairs Division at 608-266-2001, 1-800-225-7729, or on the web at: <http://psc.wi.gov/consumerinfo/complaintoverview.htm>. A staff member will obtain information from you and the utility company, and try to resolve the issue.

Service Disconnection

Utility services can be disconnected if you:

- Fail to pay your bills or deposit
- Fail to comply with a deferred payment agreement • Tamper with your meter
- Have a safety hazard
- Fail to provide utility access to your meter
- Live at an address where a prior customer failed to pay their bills and continues to reside with you

A utility must send you a notice before your service is disconnected for non-payment. Reasons for the disconnection, when the disconnection can happen, and ways to contact the utility must be included in the notice. Both you and the utility company must make reasonable attempts to resolve the problem.

Deposits

Water utility companies may require a deposit for service to ensure payment. The maximum deposit may not exceed the highest actual or estimated bill for any consecutive billing period selected by the utility that is not to exceed four months. You do not have to post a deposit if you can document that your income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. The following rules apply to payment and refund of deposits:

Existing Residential Service: A deposit can be requested if your service was disconnected during the last 12 months for nonpayment of an undisputed account or your initial application was falsified or incomplete.

New Residential Service: A deposit can be requested if you have an unpaid gas, electric, water, or sewer utility anywhere in Wisconsin during the last six years which remains undisputed. A deposit can also be required if there is good reason to believe that you do not intend to, or will be unable to pay your bills at the time payment is due.

For residential service, the deposit will be refunded, with interest, after 12 consecutive months of prompt payment.

Installment Plans and Medical Emergencies

You may use installment plans to pay what you owe your utility. They can be used for both current bills and overdue bills. A down payment and installment payments will be negotiated between you and your utility depending on your situation. If the agreed installment plans are not paid, the utility may shut off your service.

If there is a medical emergency or other crisis that prohibits you from making your payment, the utility may delay service shut-off for up to 21 days. Documentation is required by the utility from a professional involved with the medical emergency or crisis.

Delinquent Bills Levied as a Tax

Delinquent municipal utility bills may be levied as a tax.

Meter Readings

If the utility cannot read your meter, you will get an estimated bill. To avoid estimated readings, you can read your own meter. The PSC requires utilities to make a reasonable effort to read your meter every four months if you are billed monthly or bimonthly, or every nine months if you are billed quarterly or less frequently, and when there is a change of customer. You must allow these readings or your service can be disconnected.