

Minnesota Cold Weather Rule

Customer rights and responsibilities

The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule protects residential customers having difficulty paying their gas bill from having gas service disconnected from October 15 through April 15. If you receive a disconnection notice, you must act immediately. Read this brochure to learn:

- Steps you must take to prevent disconnection of gas service
- Steps you must take to have gas service reconnected
- About your right to appeal
- Your third party notification option



What to do if you receive a Notice of Proposed Disconnect or if your service has been disconnected.

In order to avoid disconnection or to have service reconnected, you must either pay your bill in full or call CenterPoint Energy and enter into a Payment Plan. You must keep the Payment Plan during the Cold Weather Rule months in order to continue to receive protection from disconnection.

Payment Plan. You have the right to make a Payment Plan during the Cold Weather Rule months. To set up a Payment Plan, call CenterPoint Energy at the number listed on the back of this pamphlet – no written application is required. If you and CenterPoint Energy agree on a Payment Plan, and you continue to make your payments, your natural gas service will not be shut off.

The Payment Plan will consider your financial circumstances, and any extenuating circumstances, and must be acceptable to you and CenterPoint Energy. It will cover what you owe plus the amount you will be billed during the period of the Payment Plan. Most payment plans under the Cold Weather Rule last until April 15 unless you agree on a different period. If you and CenterPoint Energy are unable to agree on a Payment Plan, you have a right to appeal.

CenterPoint Energy also can refer you to agencies that may be able to help you pay your fuel bills.

If you receive Energy Assistance, you are automatically eligible for protection under the Cold Weather Rule. This will qualify you for special payment terms. Under these terms, CenterPoint Energy will not require that you pay more than 10 percent of your monthly household income

for your natural gas bill. If you meet income guidelines set by the state government, but do not receive Energy Assistance, these special payment terms are also available to you when you provide proof of income.

If you find you are not able to make the payments as agreed upon, call CenterPoint Energy to request a change. If you and CenterPoint Energy are unable to agree on a Payment Plan, you have a right to appeal.

How do I apply for Cold Weather Rule protections?

Contact CenterPoint Energy to set up a Cold Weather Rule payment plan.

What happens after I apply?

If you make and keep a Cold Weather Rule payment plan, you are protected from disconnection or will be reconnected if already disconnected.

Right to appeal

If you and CenterPoint Energy cannot agree on the amount of your Payment Plan, a requested change to your Payment Plan, or your income level, you have the right to appeal. CenterPoint Energy will send you a notice of your right to appeal. This will include a form that must be sent to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) within 10 days after it is mailed to you.

The MPUC will review your appeal. During this time CenterPoint Energy will not shut off your service or will reconnect your service if you have already been disconnected. The MPUC has 20 days to make a decision about your Payment Plan after receiving the appeal form.

See back for more information

Read this brochure carefully to be sure you understand your rights and responsibilities under the Cold Weather Rule. If you have questions or would like more information, contact CenterPoint Energy at 612-372-4680 or 1-800-729-6164 (toll-free).

About the Minnesota Cold Weather Rule

The State of Minnesota set up the Cold Weather Rule to help customers who cannot pay their gas bill in full. It does not completely stop winter disconnections but provides customers extra protection from October 15 through April 15. The rule defines:

- What you can do if you receive a Notice of Proposed Disconnect
- What you can do if you have been disconnected and want reconnection of gas service

If you receive a Notice of Proposed Disconnect, CenterPoint Energy also will send you the following materials to help you manage your gas bill:

- 1.** Information about your rights and responsibilities
- 2.** Information about how to reduce energy use
- 3.** A list of agencies that help pay fuel bills
- 4.** A list of weatherization providers

Third party notice option

CenterPoint Energy offers all customers the opportunity to have a third party notified if their gas service is to be shut off. A third party could be a friend, relative, church or community agency. This program helps those who live alone, senior citizens, those who are disabled and customers who do not read English.

How it works. The third party receives copies of all disconnection notices mailed to the customer, but is NOT required to pay the bills. By volunteering, the third party is able to receive and give information about personal circumstances and make a payment plan with CenterPoint Energy for the customer. This helps avoid the hardship that would result from service disconnection.

How to request third party notification. If you want to name a third party, please complete the Third Party Notice form at right and return it to CenterPoint Energy. If you know someone who could use third party help, please give them this form.

Other important information

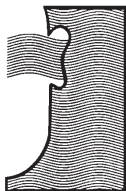
If a medical emergency exists in the home, or if an interruption of service affects necessary medical equipment, please contact CenterPoint Energy at 612-372-4680 or 1-800-729-6164 (toll-free).

CenterPoint Energy

612-372-4680 or 1-800-729-6164

TDD/TTY hearing-impaired service

612-342-5471 or 1-888-321-5472 (toll-free)
to have the TDD operator service place
a collect call to CenterPoint Energy



Third party notice request form

Complete this form, detach it and mail it to CenterPoint Energy, P.O. Box 59038, Minneapolis, MN 55459-9687, as soon as possible. In the event that a Notice of Proposed Disconnect is issued for the account listed below, CenterPoint Energy also will send a copy to the named third party at the address listed. CenterPoint Energy assumes no liability for failure of the third party to receive or act upon the notice.

Customer name (please print)

Address

City/State/ZIP

Phone number

Account number from bill

I agree that CenterPoint Energy may give information to, and accept information from, the person named below.

Customer signature

Date

Name of third party to be notified

Address

City/State/ZIP

Phone number

*Third party signature**

Date

****This request must include the third party's signature.***