

**199—20.4 (476) Customer relations.****20.4(1) Customer information.** Each utility shall:

- a. Maintain up-to-date maps, plans, or records of its entire transmission and distribution systems, together with such other information as may be necessary to enable the utility to advise prospective customers, and others entitled to the information, as to the facilities available for serving prospective customers in its service area.
- b. Assist the customer or prospective customer in selecting the most economical rate schedule available for the customer's proposed type of service.
- c. Notify customers affected by a change in rates or schedule classification in the manner provided in the rules of practice and procedure before the board. [199—7.4(476)IAC]
- d. Post a notice in a conspicuous place in each office of the utility where applications for service are received, informing the public that copies of the rate schedules and rules relating to the service of the utility, as filed with the board, are available for public inspection. If the utility has provided access to its rate schedules and rules for service on its Web site, the notice should include the Web site address.
- e. Upon request, inform its customers as to the method of reading meters.
- f. State, on the bill form, that tariff and rate schedule information is available upon request at the utility's local business office.
- g. Upon request, transmit a statement of either the customer's actual consumption, or degree day adjusted consumption, at the company's option, of electricity for each billing during the prior 12 months.
- h. Furnish such additional information as the customer may reasonably request.

**20.4(2) Customer contact employee qualifications.** Each utility shall promptly and courteously resolve inquiries for information or complaints. Employees who receive customer telephone calls and office visits shall be qualified and trained in screening and resolving complaints, to avoid a preliminary recitation of the entire complaint to employees without ability and authority to act. The employee shall provide identification to the customer that will enable the customer to reach that employee again if needed.

Each utility shall notify its customers, by bill insert or notice on the bill form, of the address and telephone number where a utility representative qualified to assist in resolving the complaint can be reached. The bill insert or notice shall also include the following statement: "If (utility name) does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Board by calling (515)281-3839, or toll-free 1-877-565-4450, or by writing to 350 Maple Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319, or by E-mail to [iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us](mailto:iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us)."

The bill insert or notice for municipal utilities shall include the following statement: "If your complaint is related to service disconnection, safety, or renewable energy, and (utility name) does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Board by calling (515)281-3839, or toll-free 1-877-565-4450, by writing to 350 Maple Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319, or by E-mail to [iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us](mailto:iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us)."

The bill insert or notice for non-rate-regulated rural electric cooperatives shall include the following statement: "If your complaint is related to the (utility name) service rather than its rates, and (utility name) does not resolve your complaint, you may request assistance from the Iowa Utilities Board by calling (515)281-3839, or toll-free 1-877-565-4450, by writing to 350 Maple Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319, or by E-mail to [iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us](mailto:iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us)."

The bill insert or notice on the bill shall be provided monthly by utilities serving more than 50,000 Iowa retail customers and no less than annually by all other electric utilities. Any utility which does not use the standard statement described in this subrule shall file its proposed statement in its tariff for approval. A utility that bills by postcard may place an advertisement in a local newspaper of general circulation or a customer newsletter instead of a mailing. The advertisement must be of a type size that is easily legible and conspicuous and must contain the information set forth above.

**20.4(3) Customer deposits.**

- a. Each utility may require from any customer or prospective customer a deposit intended to guarantee partial payment of bills for service. Each utility shall allow a person other than the customer

to pay the customer's deposit. In lieu of a cash deposit, the utility may accept the written guarantee of a surety or other responsible party as surety for an account. Upon termination of a guarantee contract, or whenever the utility deems the contract insufficient as to amount or surety, a cash deposit or a new or additional guarantee may be required for good cause upon reasonable written notice.

*b.* A new or additional deposit may be required from a customer when a deposit has been refunded or is found to be inadequate. Written notice shall be mailed advising the customer of any new or additional deposit requirement. The customer shall have no less than 12 days from the date of mailing to comply. The new or additional deposit shall be payable at any of the utility's business offices or local authorized agents. An appropriate receipt shall be provided. No written notice is required to be given of a deposit required as a prerequisite for commencing initial service.

*c.* No deposit shall be required as a condition for service other than determined by application of either credit rating or deposit calculation criteria, or both, of the filed tariff.

*d.* The total deposit for any residential or commercial customer for a place which has previously received service shall not be greater than the highest billing of service for one month for the place in the previous 12-month period. The deposit for any residential or commercial customer for a place which has not previously received service, or for an industrial customer, shall be the customer's projected one-month usage for the place to be served as determined by the utility, or as may be reasonably required by the utility in cases involving service for short periods or special occasions.

**20.4(4) *Interest on customer deposits.*** Interest shall be paid by the rate-regulated utility to each customer required to make a deposit. On or after April 21, 1994, rate-regulated utilities shall compute interest on customer deposits at 7.5 percent per annum, compounded annually. Interest for prior periods shall be computed at the rate specified by the rule in effect for the period in question. Interest shall be paid for the period beginning with the date of deposit to the date of refund or to the date that the deposit is applied to the customer's account, or to the date the customer's bill becomes permanently delinquent. The date of refund is that date on which the refund or the notice of deposit refund is forwarded to the customer's last-known address. The date a customer's bill becomes permanently delinquent, relative to an account treated as an uncollectible account, is the most recent date the account became delinquent.

**20.4(5) *Customer deposit records.*** Each utility shall keep records to show:

- a.* The name and address of each depositor.
- b.* The amount and date of the deposit.
- c.* Each transaction concerning the deposit.

**20.4(6) *Customer's receipt for a deposit.*** Each utility shall issue a receipt of deposit to each customer from whom a deposit is received, and shall provide means whereby a depositor may establish claim if the receipt is lost.

**20.4(7) *Deposit refund.*** A deposit shall be refunded after 12 consecutive months of prompt payment (which may be 11 timely payments and 1 automatic forgiveness of late payment). For refund purposes the account shall be reviewed for prompt payment after 12 months of service following the making of the deposit and for each 12-month interval terminating on the anniversary of the deposit. However, deposits received from customers subject to the exemption provided by 20.4(3) "b," including surety deposits, may be retained by the utility until final billing. Upon termination of service, the deposit plus accumulated interest, less any unpaid utility bill of the customer, shall be reimbursed to the person who made the deposit.

**20.4(8) *Unclaimed deposits.*** The utility shall make a reasonable effort to return each unclaimed deposit and accrued interest after the termination of the services for which the deposit was made. The utility shall maintain a record of deposit information for at least two years or until such time as the deposit, together with accrued interest, escheats to the state pursuant to Iowa Code section 556.4, at which time the record and deposit, together with accrued interest less any lawful deductions, shall be sent to the state treasurer pursuant to Iowa Code section 556.11.

**20.4(9) *Customer bill forms.*** Each customer shall be informed as promptly as possible following the reading of the customer's meter, on bill form or otherwise, of the following:

- a.* The reading of the meter at the beginning and at the end of the period for which the bill is rendered.

- b. The dates on which the meter was read, at the beginning and end of the billing period.
- c. The number and kind of units metered.
- d. The applicable rate schedule, or identification of the applicable rate schedule.
- e. The account balance brought forward and amount of each net charge for rate-schedule-priced utility service, sales tax, other taxes, late payment charge, and total amount currently due. In the case of prepayment meters, the amount of money collected shall be shown.
- f. The last date for timely payment shall be clearly shown and shall be not less than 20 days after the bill is rendered.
- g. A distinct marking to identify an estimated bill.
- h. A distinct marking to identify a minimum bill.
- i. Any conversions from meter reading units to billing units, or any calculations to determine billing units from recording or other devices, or any other factors, such as sliding scale or automatic adjustment and amount of sales tax adjustments used in determining the bill.
- j. Customer billing information alternate. A utility serving less than 5000 electric customers may provide the information in 20.4(9) on bill form or otherwise. If the utility elects not to provide the information of 20.4(9), it shall advise the customer, on bill form or by bill insert, that such information can be obtained by contacting the utility's local office.

**20.4(10)** Rescinded, effective 7/1/81.

**20.4(11)** *Payment agreements.*

a. *Availability of a first payment agreement.* When a residential customer cannot pay in full a delinquent bill for utility service or has an outstanding debt to the utility for residential utility service and is not in default of a payment agreement with the utility, a utility shall offer the customer an opportunity to enter into a reasonable payment agreement.

b. *Reasonableness.* Whether a payment agreement is reasonable will be determined by considering the current household income, ability to pay, payment history including prior defaults on similar agreements, the size of the bill, the amount of time and the reasons why the bill has been outstanding, and any special circumstances creating extreme hardships within the household. The utility may require the person to confirm financial difficulty with an acknowledgment from the department of human services or another agency.

c. *Terms of payment agreements.*

(1) *First payment agreement.* The utility shall offer customers who have received a disconnection notice or have been disconnected 120 days or less and who are not in default of a payment agreement the option of spreading payments evenly over at least 12 months by paying specific amounts at scheduled times. The utility shall offer customers who have been disconnected more than 120 days and who are not in default of a payment agreement the option of spreading payments evenly over at least 6 months by paying specific amounts at scheduled times.

1. The agreement shall also include provision for payment of the current account. The agreement negotiations and periodic payment terms shall comply with tariff provisions which are consistent with these rules. The utility may also require the customer to enter into a level payment plan to pay the current bill.

2. When the customer makes the agreement in person, a signed copy of the agreement shall be provided to the customer.

3. The utility may offer the customer the option of making the agreement over the telephone or through electronic transmission. When the customer makes the agreement over the telephone or through electronic transmission, the utility shall render to the customer a written document reflecting the terms and conditions of the agreement within three days of the date the parties entered into the oral agreement or electronic agreement. The document will be considered rendered to the customer when addressed to the customer's last-known address and deposited in the U.S. mail with postage prepaid. If delivery is by other than U.S. mail, the document shall be considered rendered to the customer when delivered to the last-known address of the person responsible for payment for the service. The document shall state that unless the customer notifies the utility within ten days from the date the document is rendered, it will be deemed that the customer accepts the terms as reflected in the written document. The document stating

the terms and agreements shall include the address and a toll-free or collect telephone number where a qualified representative can be reached. By making the first payment, the customer confirms acceptance of the terms of the oral agreement or electronic agreement.

4. Each customer entering into a first payment agreement shall be granted at least one late payment that is made four days or less beyond the due date for payment and the first payment agreement shall remain in effect.

(2) *Second payment agreement.* The utility shall offer a second payment agreement to a customer who is in default of a first payment agreement if the customer has made at least two consecutive full payments under the first payment agreement. The second payment agreement shall be for the same term as or longer than the term of the first payment agreement. The customer shall be required to pay for current service in addition to the monthly payments under the second payment agreement and may be required to make the first payment up-front as a condition of entering into the second payment agreement. The utility may also require the customer to enter into a level payment plan to pay the current bill. The utility may offer additional payment agreements to the customer.

*d. Refusal by utility.* A customer may offer the utility a proposed payment agreement. If the utility and the customer do not reach an agreement, the utility may refuse the offer orally, but the utility must render a written refusal to the customer, stating the reason for the refusal, within three days of the oral notification. The written refusal shall be considered rendered to the customer when addressed to the customer's last-known address and deposited in the U.S. mail with postage prepaid. If delivery is by other than U.S. mail, the written refusal shall be considered rendered to the customer when handed to the customer or when delivered to the last-known address of the person responsible for the payment for the service.

A customer may ask the board for assistance in working out a reasonable payment agreement. The request for assistance must be made to the board within ten days after the rendering of the written refusal. During the review of this request, the utility shall not disconnect the service.

**20.4(12) Bill payment terms.** The bill shall be considered rendered to the customer when deposited in the U.S. mail with postage prepaid. If delivery is by other than U.S. mail, the bill shall be considered rendered when delivered to the last-known address of the party responsible for payment. There shall not be less than 20 days between the rendering of a bill and the date by which the account becomes delinquent. Bills for customers on more frequent billing intervals under subrule 20.3(6) may not be considered delinquent less than 5 days from the date of rendering. However, a late payment charge may not be assessed if payment is received within 20 days of the date the bill is rendered.

*a.* The date of delinquency for all residential customers or other customers whose consumption is less than 3,000 kWh per month, shall be changeable for cause in writing; such as, but not limited to, 15 days from approximate date each month upon which income is received by the person responsible for payment. In no case, however, shall the utility be required to delay the date of delinquency more than 30 days beyond the date of preparation of the previous bill.

*b.* In any case where net and gross amounts are billed to customers, the difference between net and gross is a late payment charge and is valid only when part of a delinquent bill payment. A utility's late payment charge shall not exceed 1.5 percent per month of the past due amount. No collection fee may be levied in addition to this late payment charge. This rule does not prohibit cost-justified charges for disconnection and reconnection of service.

*c.* If the customer makes partial payment in a timely manner, and does not designate the service or product for which payment is made, the payment shall be credited pro rata between the bill for utility services and related taxes.

*d.* Each account shall be granted not less than one complete forgiveness of a late payment charge each calendar year. The utility's rules shall be definitive that on one monthly bill in each period of eligibility, the utility will accept the net amount of such bill as full payment for such month after expiration of the net payment period. The rules shall state how the customer is notified that

the eligibility has been used. Complete forgiveness prohibits any effect upon the credit rating of the customer or collection of late payment charge.

*e.* Level payment plan. Utilities shall offer a level payment plan to all residential customers or other customers whose consumption is less than 3,000 kWh per month. A level payment plan should be designed to limit the volatility of a customer's bill and maintain reasonable account balances. The level payment plan shall include at least the following:

(1) Be offered to each eligible customer when the customer initially requests service.

(2) Allow for entry into the level payment plan anytime during the calendar year.

(3) Provide that a customer may request termination of the plan at any time. If the customer's account is in arrears at the time of termination, the balance shall be due and payable at the time of termination. If there is a credit balance, the customer shall be allowed the option of obtaining a refund or applying the credit to future charges. A utility is not required to offer a new level payment plan to a customer for six months after the customer has terminated from a level payment plan.

(4) Use a computation method that produces a reasonable monthly level payment amount, which may take into account forward-looking factors such as fuel price and weather forecasts, and that complies with requirements in 20.4(12) "e"(4). The computation method used by the utility shall be described in the utility's tariff and shall be subject to board approval. The utility shall give notice to customers when it changes the type of computation method in the level payment plan.

The amount to be paid at each billing interval by a customer on a level payment plan shall be computed at the time of entry into the plan and shall be recomputed at least annually. The level payment amount may be recomputed monthly, quarterly, when requested by the customer, or whenever price, consumption, or a combination of factors results in a new estimate differing by 10 percent or more from that in use.

When the level payment amount is recomputed, the level payment plan account balance shall be divided by 12, and the resulting amount shall be added to the estimated monthly level payment amount. Except when a utility has a level payment plan that recomputes the level payment amount monthly, the customer shall be given the option of applying any credit to payments of subsequent months' level payment amounts due or of obtaining a refund of any credit in excess of \$25.

Except when a utility has a level payment plan that recomputes the level payment amount monthly, the customer shall be notified of the recomputed payment amount not less than one full billing period prior to the date of delinquency for the recomputed payment. The notice may accompany the bill prior to the bill that is affected by the recomputed payment amount.

(5) Irrespective of the account balance, a delinquency in payment shall be subject to the same collection and disconnection procedures as other accounts, with the late payment charge applied to the level payment amount. If the account balance is a credit, the level payment plan may be terminated by the utility after 30 days of delinquency.

**20.4(13) *Customer records.*** The utility shall retain records as may be necessary to effectuate compliance with 20.4(14) and 20.6(6), but not less than three years. Records for customer shall show where applicable:

- a.* kWh meter reading
- b.* kWh consumption
- c.* kW meter reading
- d.* kW measured demand
- e.* kW billing demand
- f.* Total amount of bill.

**20.4(14) *Adjustment of bills.***

*a. Meter error.* Whenever a meter creeps or whenever a metering installation is found upon any test to have an average error of more than 2.0 percent for watt-hour metering; or a demand metering error of more than 1.5 percent in addition to the errors allowed under accuracy of demand metering; an adjustment of bills for service for the period of inaccuracy shall be made in the case of overregistration

and may be made in the case of underregistration. The amount of the adjustment shall be calculated on the basis that the metering equipment should be 100 percent accurate with respect to the testing equipment used to make the test. For watt-hour metering installations the average accuracy shall be the arithmetic average of the percent registration at 10 percent of rated test current and at 100 percent of rated test current giving the 100 percent of rated test current registration a weight of four and the 10 percent of rated test current registration a weight of one.

*b. Determination of adjustment.* Recalculation of bills shall be on the basis of actual monthly consumption except that if service has been measured by self-contained single-phase meters or three-wire network meters and involves no billing other than for kilowatt-hours, the recalculation of bills may be based on the average monthly consumption determined from the most recent 36 months, consumption data.

When the average error cannot be determined by test because of failure of part or all of the metering equipment, it shall be permissible to use the registration of check metering installations, if any, or to estimate the quantity of energy consumed based on available data. The customer must be advised of the failure and of the basis for the estimate of quantity billed. The periods of error shall be used as defined in immediately following subparagraphs (1) and (2).

(1) Overregistration. If the date when overregistration began can be determined, such date shall be the starting point for determination of the amount of the adjustment. If the date when overregistration began cannot be determined, it shall be assumed that the error has existed for the shortest time period calculated as one-half the time since the meter was installed, or one-half the time elapsed since the last meter test unless otherwise ordered by the board.

The overregistration due to creep shall be calculated by timing the rate of creeping and assuming that the creeping affected the registration of the meter for 25 percent of the time since the more recent of either metering installation or last previous test.

(2) Underregistration. If the date when underregistration began can be determined, it shall be the starting point for determination of the amount of the adjustment except that billing adjustment shall be limited to the preceding six months. If the date when underregistration began cannot be determined, it shall be assumed that the error has existed for one-half of the time elapsed since the more recent of either meter installation or the last meter test, except that billing adjustment shall be limited to the preceding six months unless otherwise ordered by the board.

The underregistration due to creep shall be calculated by timing the rate of creeping and assuming that this creeping affected the registration for 25 percent of the time since the more recent of either metering installation or last previous test, except that billing adjustment shall be limited to the preceding six months.

*c. Refunds.* If the recalculated bills indicate that \$5 or more is due an existing customer or \$10 or more is due a person no longer a customer of the utility, the tariff shall provide refunding of the full amount of the calculated difference between the amount paid and the recalculated amount. Refunds shall be made to the two most recent customers who received service through the metering installation found to be in error. In the case of a previous customer who is no longer a customer of the utility, a notice of the amount subject to refund shall be mailed to such previous customer at the last-known address, and the utility shall, upon demand made within three months thereafter, refund the same.

Refunds shall be completed within six months following the date of the metering installation test.

*d. Back billing.* A utility may not back bill due to underregistration unless a minimum back bill amount is specified in its tariff. The minimum amount specified for back billing shall not be less than, but may be greater than, \$5 for an existing customer or \$10 for a former customer. All recalculations resulting in an amount due equal or greater than the tariff specified minimum shall result in issuance of a back bill.

Back billings shall be rendered no later than six months following the date of the metering installation test.

*e. Overcharges.* When a customer has been overcharged as a result of incorrect reading of the meter, incorrect application of the rate schedule, incorrect connection of the metering installation or other similar reasons, the amount of the overcharge shall be adjusted, refunded or credited to the customer. The time period for which the utility is required to adjust, refund, or credit the customer's bill shall not exceed five years unless otherwise ordered by the board.

*f. Undercharges.* When a customer has been undercharged as a result of incorrect reading of the meter, incorrect application of the rate schedule, incorrect connection of the meter or other similar reasons, the amount of the undercharge may be billed to the customer. The period for which the utility may adjust for the undercharge shall not exceed five years unless otherwise ordered by the board. The maximum back bill shall not exceed the dollar amount equivalent to the tariffed rate for like charges (e.g., usage-based, fixed or service charges) in the 12 months preceding discovery of the error unless otherwise ordered by the board.

*g. Credits and explanations.* Credits due a customer because of meter inaccuracies, errors in billing, or misapplication of rates shall be separately identified.

**20.4(15) Refusal or disconnection of service.** A utility shall refuse service or disconnect service to a customer, as defined in subrule 20.1(3), in accordance with tariffs that are consistent with these rules.

*a.* The utility shall give written notice of pending disconnection except as specified in paragraph 20.4(15) "b." The notice shall set forth the reason for the notice and the final date by which the account is to be settled or specific action taken. The notice shall be considered rendered to the customer when addressed to the customer's last-known address and deposited in the U.S. mail with postage prepaid. If delivery is by other than U.S. mail, the notice shall be considered rendered when delivered to the last-known address of the person responsible for payment for the service. The date for disconnection of service shall be not less than 12 days after the notice is rendered. The date for disconnection of service for customers on shorter billing intervals under subrule 20.3(6) shall not be less than 24 hours after the notice is posted at the service premises.

One written notice, including all reasons for the notice, shall be given where more than one cause exists for disconnection of service. In determining the final date by which the account is to be settled or other specific action taken, the days of notice for the causes shall be concurrent.

*b.* Service may be disconnected without notice:

- (1) In the event of a condition on the customer's premises determined by the utility to be hazardous.
- (2) In the event of customer use of equipment in a manner which adversely affects the utility's equipment or the utility's service to others.
- (3) In the event of tampering with the equipment furnished and owned by the utility. For the purposes of this subrule, a broken or absent meter seal alone shall not constitute tampering.
- (4) In the event of unauthorized use.

*c.* Service may be disconnected or refused after proper notice:

- (1) For violation of or noncompliance with the utility's rules on file with the board.
- (2) For failure of the customer to furnish the service equipment, permits, certificates, or rights-of-way which are specified to be furnished, in the utility's rules filed with the board, as conditions of obtaining service, or for the withdrawal of that same equipment, or for the termination of those same permissions or rights, or for the failure of the customer to fulfill the contractual obligations imposed as conditions of obtaining service by any contract filed with and subject to the regulatory authority of the board.

- (3) For failure of the customer to permit the utility reasonable access to the utility's equipment.

d. Service may be refused or disconnected after proper notice for nonpayment of a bill or deposit, except as restricted by subrules 20.4(16) and 20.4(17), provided that the utility has complied with the following provisions when applicable:

(1) Given the customer a reasonable opportunity to dispute the reason for the disconnection or refusal.

(2) Given the customer, and any other person or agency designated by the customer, written notice that the customer has at least 12 days in which to make settlement of the account to avoid disconnection and a written summary of the rights and responsibilities available. Customers billed more frequently than monthly pursuant to subrule 20.3(6) shall be given posted written notice that they have 24 hours to make settlement of the account to avoid disconnection and a written summary of the rights and responsibilities. All written notices shall include a toll-free or collect telephone number where a utility representative qualified to provide additional information about the disconnection can be reached. Each utility representative must provide the representative's name and have immediate access to current, detailed information concerning the customer's account and previous contacts with the utility.

(3) The summary of the rights and responsibilities must be approved by the board. Any utility providing electric service and defined as a public utility in Iowa Code section 476.1 which does not use the standard form set forth below for customers billed monthly shall submit to the board an original and six copies of its proposed form for approval. A utility billing a combination customer for both gas and electric service may modify the standard form to replace each use of the word "electric" with the words "gas and electric" in all instances.

#### **CUSTOMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES TO AVOID SHUTOFF OF ELECTRIC SERVICE FOR NONPAYMENT**

##### **1. What can I do if I receive a notice from the utility that says my service will be shut off because I have a past due bill?**

- a. Pay the bill in full; or
- b. Enter into a reasonable payment plan with the utility (see #2 below); or
- c. Apply for and become eligible for low-income energy assistance (see #3 below); or
- d. Give the utility a written statement from a doctor or public health official stating that shutting off your electric service would pose an especial health danger for a person living at the residence (see #4 below); or
- e. Tell the utility if you think part of the amount shown on the bill is wrong. However, you must still pay the part of the bill you agree you owe the utility (see #5 below).

##### **2. How do I go about making a reasonable payment plan? (Residential customers only)**

- a. Contact the utility as soon as you know you cannot pay the amount you owe. If you cannot pay all the money you owe at one time, the utility may offer you a payment plan that spreads payments evenly over at least 12 months. The plan may be longer depending on your financial situation.
- b. If you have not made the payments you promised in a previous payment plan with the utility and still owe money, you may qualify for a second payment agreement under certain conditions.
- c. If you do not make the payments you promise, the utility may shut off your utility service on one day's notice unless all the money you owe the utility is paid or you enter into another payment agreement.

##### **3. How do I apply for low-income energy assistance? (Residential customers only)**

- a. Contact the local community action agency in your area (see attached list); or
- b. Contact the Division of Community Action Agencies at the Iowa Department of Human Rights, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319; telephone (515)281-0859. To prevent disconnection, you must contact the utility prior to disconnection of your service.
- c. To avoid disconnection, you must apply for energy assistance before your service is shut off. Notify your utility that you may be eligible and have applied for energy assistance. Once your service has been disconnected, it will not be reconnected based on approval for energy assistance.

d. Being certified eligible for energy assistance will prevent your service from being disconnected from November 1 through April 1.

##### **4. What if someone living at the residence has a serious health condition? (Residential customers only)**

Contact the utility if you believe this is the case. Contact your doctor or a public health official and ask the doctor or health official to contact the utility and state that shutting off your utility service would pose an especial health danger for a person living at your residence. The doctor or public health official must provide a written statement to the utility office within 5 days of when your doctor or public health official notifies the utility of the health condition; otherwise, your utility service may be shut off. If the utility receives this written statement, your service will not be shut off for 30 days. This 30-day delay is to allow you time to arrange payment of your utility bill or find other living arrangements. After 30 days, your service may be shut off if payment arrangements have not been made.

**5. What should I do if I believe my bill is not correct?**

You may dispute your utility bill. You must tell the utility that you dispute the bill. You must pay the part of the bill you think is correct. If you do this, the utility will not shut off your service for 45 days from the date the bill was mailed while you and the utility work out the dispute over the part of the bill you think is incorrect. You may ask the Iowa Utilities Board for assistance in resolving the dispute. (See #9 below.)

**6. When can the utility shut off my utility service because I have not paid my bill?**

- a. Your utility can shut off service between the hours of 6 a.m. and 2 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- b. The utility will not shut off your service on nights, weekends, or holidays for nonpayment of a bill.
- c. The utility will not shut off your service if you enter into a reasonable payment plan to pay the overdue amount (see #2 above).
- d. The utility will not shut off your service if the temperature is forecasted to be 20 degrees Fahrenheit or colder during the following 24-hour period, including the day your service is scheduled to be shut off.
- e. If you have qualified for low-income energy assistance, the utility cannot shut off your service from November 1 through April 1. However, you will still owe the utility for the service used during this time.
- f. The utility will not shut off your service if you have notified the utility that you dispute a portion of your bill and you pay the part of the bill that you agree is correct.

**7. How will I be told the utility is going to shut off my service?**

- a. You must be given a written notice at least 12 days before the utility service can be shut off for nonpayment. This notice will include the reason for shutting off your service.
- b. If you have not made payments required by an agreed-upon payment plan, your service may be disconnected with only one day's notice.
- c. The utility must also try to reach you by telephone or in person before it shuts off your service. From November 1 through April 1, if the utility cannot reach you by telephone or in person, the utility will put a written notice on the door of your residence to tell you that your utility service will be shut off.

**8. If service is shut off, when will it be turned back on?**

- a. The utility will turn your service back on if you pay the whole amount you owe or agree to a reasonable payment plan (see #2 above).
- b. If you make your payment during regular business hours, or by 7 p.m. for utilities permitting such payment or other arrangements after regular business hours, the utility must make a reasonable effort to turn your service back on that day. If service cannot reasonably be turned on that same day, the utility must do it by 11 a.m. the next day.
- c. The utility may charge you a fee to turn your service back on. Those fees may be higher in the evening or on weekends, so you may ask that your service be turned on during normal utility business hours.

**9. Is there any other help available besides my utility?**

If the utility has not been able to help you with your problem, you may contact the Iowa Utilities Board toll-free at 1-877-565-4450. You may also write the Iowa Utilities Board at 350 Maple Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0069, or by E-mail at [iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us](mailto:iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us). Low-income customers may also be eligible for free legal assistance from Iowa Legal Aid, and may contact Legal Aid at 1-800-532-1275.

(4) If the utility has adopted a service limitation policy pursuant to subrule 20.4(23), the following paragraph shall be appended to the end of the standard form for the summary of rights and remedies, as set forth in subparagraph 20.4(15) “d”(3):

*Service limitation:* We have adopted a policy of service limitation before disconnection. You may be qualified for service limitation rather than disconnection. To see if you qualify, contact our business office.

(5) When disconnecting service to a residence, made a diligent attempt to contact, by telephone or in person, the customer responsible for payment for service to the residence to inform the customer of the pending disconnection and the customer’s rights and responsibilities. During the period from November 1 through April 1, if the attempt at customer contact fails, the premises shall be posted at least one day prior to disconnection with a notice informing the customer of the pending disconnection and rights and responsibilities available to avoid disconnection.

If an attempt at personal or telephone contact of a customer occupying a rental unit has been unsuccessful, the landlord of the rental unit, if known, shall be contacted to determine if the customer is still in occupancy and, if so, the customer’s present location. The landlord shall also be informed of the date when service may be disconnected.

If the disconnection will affect occupants of residential units leased from the customer, the premises of any building known by the utility to contain residential units affected by disconnection must be posted, at least two days prior to disconnection, with a notice informing any occupants of the date when service will be disconnected and the reasons for the disconnection.

(6) Disputed bill. If the customer has received notice of disconnection and has a dispute concerning a bill for electric utility service, the utility may require the customer to pay a sum of money equal to the amount of the undisputed portion of the bill pending settlement and thereby avoid disconnection of service. A utility shall delay disconnection for nonpayment of the disputed bill for up to 45 days after the rendering of the bill if the customer pays the undisputed amount. The 45 days shall be extended by up to 60 days if requested of the utility by the board in the event the customer files a written complaint with the board in compliance with 199—Chapter 6.

(7) Reconnection. Disconnection of a residential customer may take place only between the hours of 6 a.m. and 2 p.m. on a weekday and not on weekends or holidays. If a disconnected customer makes payment or other arrangements during normal business hours, or by 7 p.m. for utilities permitting such payment or other arrangements after normal business hours, all reasonable efforts shall be made to reconnect the customer that day. If a disconnected customer makes payment or other arrangements after 7 p.m., all reasonable efforts shall be made to reconnect the customer not later than 11 a.m. the next day.

(8) Severe cold weather. A disconnection may not take place where electricity is used as the only source of space heating or to control or operate the only space heating equipment at the residence on any day when the National Weather Service forecast for the following 24 hours covering the area in which the residence is located includes a forecast that the temperature will be 20 degrees Fahrenheit or colder. In any case where the utility has posted a disconnect notice in compliance with subparagraph 20.4(15) “d”(5) but is precluded from disconnecting service because of a National Weather Service forecast, the utility may immediately proceed with appropriate disconnection procedures, without further notice, when the temperature in the area where the residence is located rises above 20 degrees Fahrenheit and is forecasted to be above 20 degrees Fahrenheit for at least 24 hours, unless the customer has paid in full the past due amount or is entitled to postponement of disconnection under some other provision of paragraph 20.4(15) “d.”

(9) Health of a resident. Disconnection of a residential customer shall be postponed if the disconnection of service would present an especial danger to the health of any permanent resident of the premises. An especial danger to health is indicated if a person appears to be seriously impaired and may, because of mental or physical problems, be unable to manage the person’s own resources, to carry out activities of daily living or to be protected from neglect or hazardous situations without assistance from others. Indicators of an especial danger to health include but are not limited to: age, infirmity, or

mental incapacitation; serious illness; physical disability, including blindness and limited mobility; and any other factual circumstances which indicate a severe or hazardous health situation.

The utility may require written verification of the especial danger to health by a physician or a public health official, including the name of the person endangered; a statement that the person is a resident of the premises in question; the name, business address, and telephone number of the certifying party; the nature of the health danger; and approximately how long the danger will continue. Initial verification by the verifying party may be by telephone if written verification is forwarded to the utility within five days.

Verification shall postpone disconnection for 30 days. In the event service is terminated within 14 days prior to verification of illness by or for a qualifying resident, service shall be restored to that residence if a proper verification is thereafter made in accordance with the foregoing provisions. If the customer does not enter into a reasonable payment agreement for the retirement of the unpaid balance of the account within the first 30 days and does not keep the current account paid during the period that the unpaid balance is to be retired, the customer is subject to disconnection pursuant to paragraph 20.4(15) "f."

(10) Winter energy assistance (November 1 through April 1). If the utility is informed that the customer's household may qualify for winter energy assistance or weatherization funds, there shall be no disconnection of service for 30 days from the date the utility is notified to allow the customer time to obtain assistance. Disconnection shall not take place from November 1 through April 1 for a resident who is a head of household and who has been certified to the public utility by the community action agency as eligible for either the low-income home energy assistance program or weatherization assistance program.

*e.* Abnormal electric consumption. A customer who is subject to disconnection for nonpayment of bill, and who has electric consumption which appears to the customer to be abnormally high, may request the utility to provide assistance in identifying the factors contributing to this usage pattern and to suggest remedial measures. The utility shall provide assistance by discussing patterns of electric usage which may be readily identifiable, suggesting that an energy audit be conducted, and identifying sources of energy conservation information and financial assistance which may be available to the customer.

*f.* A utility may disconnect electric service without the written 12-day notice for failure of the customer to comply with the terms of a payment agreement, except as provided in numbered paragraph 20.4(11) "c"(1)"4," provided the utility complies with the provisions of paragraph 20.4(15) "d."

*g.* The utility shall, prior to November 1, mail customers a notice describing the availability of winter energy assistance funds and the application process. The notice must be of a type size that is easily legible and conspicuous and must contain the information set out by the state agency administering the assistance program. A utility serving fewer than 25,000 customers may publish the notice in a customer newsletter in lieu of mailing. A utility serving fewer than 6,000 customers may publish the notice in an advertisement in a local newspaper of general circulation or shopper's guide.

*h.* A utility may disconnect electric service without the written 12-day notice for failure of a residential customer who has had service limited in accordance with subrule 20.4(23) to pay the full amount due for past service or to enter into a reasonable payment agreement, provided that:

(1) The minimum time period, as specified in the utility's tariff, for the service limiter to remain in place prior to initiation of the disconnection procedure has elapsed;

(2) The requirements of paragraph 20.4(15) "f," relating to in-person, telephone or posted notice, have been satisfied;

(3) The requirements of subparagraphs 20.4(15) "d"(7) and (8), relating to time and temperature restrictions on disconnection are satisfied, to the extent applicable; and

(4) The requirements of subparagraph 20.4(15) "d"(9), relating to health restrictions on disconnection are satisfied, to the extent applicable.

**20.4(16) *Insufficient reasons for denying service.*** The following shall not constitute sufficient cause for refusal of service to a customer:

*a.* Delinquency in payment for service by a previous occupant of the premises to be served.

- b. Failure to pay for merchandise purchased from the utility.
- c. Failure to pay for a different type or class of public utility service.
- d. Failure to pay the bill of another customer as guarantor thereof.
- e. Failure to pay the back bill rendered in accordance with paragraph 20.4(14) "d" (slow meters).
- f. Failure to pay a bill rendered in accordance with paragraph 20.4(14) "f."
- g. Failure of a residential customer to pay a deposit during the period November 1 through April 1 for the location at which the customer has been receiving service.
- h. Delinquency in payment for service by an occupant if the customer applying for service is creditworthy and able to satisfy any deposit requirements.

**20.4(17) *When disconnection prohibited.*** No disconnection may take place from November 1 through April 1 for a resident who has been certified to the public utility by the local community action agency as being eligible for either the low-income home energy assistance program or weatherization assistance program.

**20.4(18) *Estimated demand.*** Upon request of the customer and provided the customer's demand is estimated for billing purposes, the utility shall measure the demand during the customer's normal operation and use the measured demand for billing.

**20.4(19) *Servicing utilization control equipment.*** Each utility shall service and maintain any equipment it uses on customer's premises and shall correctly set and keep in proper adjustment any thermostats, clocks, relays, time switches or other devices which control the customer's service in accordance with the provisions in the utility's rate schedules.

**20.4(20) *Customer complaints.*** Complaints concerning the charges, practices, facilities or service of the utility shall be investigated promptly and thoroughly. The utility shall keep such records of customer complaints as will enable it to review and analyze its procedures and actions.

a. Each utility shall provide in its filed tariff a concise, fully informative procedure for the resolution of customer complaints.

b. The utility shall take reasonable steps to ensure that customers unable to travel shall not be denied the right to be heard.

c. The final step in a complaint hearing and review procedure shall be a filing for board resolution of the issues.

**20.4(21) *Temporary service.*** When the utility renders temporary service to a customer it may require that the customer bear all of the cost of installing and removing the service facilities in excess of any salvage realized.

**20.4(22) *Change in type of service.*** If a change in the type of service, such as from 25- to 60-cycle or from direct or alternating current, or a change in voltage to a customer's substation, is effected at the insistence of the utility and not solely by reason of increase in the customer's load or change in the character thereof, the utility shall share equitably in the cost of changing the equipment of the customer affected as determined by the board in the absence of agreement between utility and customer. In general, the customer should be protected against or reimbursed for the following losses and expenses to an appropriate degree:

a. Loss of value in electrical power utilization equipment.

b. Cost of changes in wiring, and

c. Cost of removing old and installing new utilization equipment.

**20.4(23) *Limitation of service.*** The utility shall have the option of adopting a policy for limiting the service of a residential customer for nonpayment of a bill or deposit, or for noncompliance with the terms of a payment agreement, as a measure to be taken prior to disconnection of the customer. Electric-heating residential customers shall not have limited service between November 1 and April 1. For purposes of this rule, "electric-heating" shall mean heating by means of a fixed-installation electric appliance which serves as the primary heat source.

A service limitation policy, if adopted by the utility, shall be set forth in the utility's tariff and shall specify some minimum time period for the service limiter to remain in place prior to the initiation of the disconnection procedure set forth in 20.4(15) "h." A service limitation policy, if adopted by the utility, shall be applied uniformly to all of the utility's residential customers, as specified above, to the extent

that adaptation of service limiters to customer meters is feasible, and to the extent that customer meters are readily accessible to those installing the service limiters and to the customers. Any other exceptions to uniform application of this policy must be on the basis of rational, specific criteria set forth in the utility's tariff receiving prior approval by the board.

Notice of a pending service limitation shall be rendered, and electric service limited, as set forth in the tariff.

Upon installing a service limiter, the utility shall post the premises with a notice informing the occupant of the installation of the service limiter, its purpose, how it operates, and how it can be reset by the occupant.

The notice of pending service limitation required by these rules shall satisfy the requirements of subrule 20.4(15), substituting "service limitation" for "disconnection" or "refusal or disconnection of service" throughout the rule.

Service may be limited for nonpayment of bill or deposit, except as restricted by subrule 20.4(16), relating to insufficient reasons for denying service, provided that the utility has satisfied the requirements of 20.4(15) "d," excluding the portion of subparagraph (4) "special circumstances" relating to same-day reconnection, and substituting "service limitation" for "disconnection" (and all other forms of that term) throughout that subrule. An installed service limiter shall be removed no later than the next working day after the residential customer has paid the delinquent bill or deposit in full or has entered into a reasonable payment agreement with the utility.

Service may be limited without the written 12-day notice for failure of the customer to comply with the terms of a payment agreement, provided that the requirements of 20.4(15) "f" have been satisfied, excluding the portion of subparagraph (2) relating to same-day reconnection, and substituting "service limitation" for "disconnection" (and all other forms of that term) throughout that subrule.