

Suggested citation if referencing the below information: Sanya Carley and David Konisky, 2023, “Utility Disconnections Dashboard,” Energy Justice Lab.



Maine

Last updated: July 3, 2024

Covered utilities: These policies pertain to electricity customers who receive their service from an investor-owned utility, a municipal utility, or an electric cooperative in the State of Maine.

65-407 CMR Ch. 815, § 1, 35-A M.R.S.A. § 103, 102, 3201

Weather Protections

Customers may not be disconnected from their utility service when the forecasted temperature falls below 32 degrees F on the same calendar day from November 15th to April 15th.

Disconnections may not take place without authorization of the Commission’s Consumer Assistance and Safety Division (CASD).

After March 31, a utility may not send out a disconnection notice for arrearages from November 1st through March 31st, unless the utility has attempted to make personal contact with the customer to establish a payment arrangement. If the customer refuses a payment arrangement, the utility may disconnect with 14 days of notice.

During the winter, customers will also be disconnected if they fail to comply with a payment arrangement. If the initial payment arrangement made during the winter was a Special Payment Arrangement, and the customer failed to comply that same winter, the utility must offer a second payment arrangement before disconnection. If the initial payment arrangement was some other type, the utility may attempt to offer a second payment arrangement but is not required to do so.

On March 19, 2024, a new law was enacted that directs the Public Utilities Commission to adopt rules pertaining to residential customers of transmission and distribution utilities and gas utilities to prohibit the termination or disconnection of utility service for unpaid utility bills during extreme weather or temperature conditions, including extreme heat or humidity, between April 16th and November 14th. As of this update, these rules are not yet in place.

65-407 CMR Ch. 815, § 1, 9, and 10; 65-407 CMR Ch. 815, § 2; S.P. 798 – L.D. 1962

Medical Protections

Customers with medical conditions will have disconnections delayed for a maximum of 90 days if a medical emergency exists where a lack of utility service would pose a serious threat of harm to a member of the household. Medical certificates may be issued by a physician or physician’s assistant in the State of Maine. Utilities can choose to require any of the following in the

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written certificate: statement of serious illness, anticipated length of the medical emergency, and why continued service is required.

Customers who receive a medical protection must enter into a payment agreement. Utilities will delay disconnections for up to 3 business days if the customer notifies the utility that he intends to obtain a medical certificate.

65-407 CMR Ch. 815, § 2, 11

Other Customer Protections

There are no specific protections for households with children, elderly residents, individuals with disabilities, or military personnel.

General Exemptions

Utilities can request an exemption from the rules for reasons of hardship.

65-407 CMR Ch. 815, § 16

Notification Requirements

Written notification of at least 14 days is required from a utility before a customer may be disconnected. In-person or telephone notifications are also required. However, a utility is not required to delay a disconnection if it is unable to reach a customer by a telephone call or an in-person visit.

65-407 CMR Ch. 815, § 10

Payment Information, Delinquency, and Fee Information

Customers have at least 25 days after the bill's postmarked due date to pay their bills before becoming past-due. There is a minimum delinquency period of 5 days before a disconnection can occur if customers are not given more than 25 days to pay their original bill.

There is a minimum arrearage of \$50 before a utility may disconnect a customer. However, once the bill has been overdue for over 90 days, the utility may disconnect. Disconnection is also possible for less than \$50 if the utility only bills customers 4 times a year or less.

Customer may be charged fees associated with a disconnection or a reconnection.

Utilities may provide customers with payment plans.

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On March 19, 2024, a new law was enacted that directs the Public Utilities Commission to adopt rules pertaining to residential customers of transmission and distribution utilities and gas utilities to establish a threshold dollar amount greater than \$50 owed by a customer who does not pay or make a payment arrangement on an undisputed overdue utility bill at or above which the utility may terminate or disconnect utility service. In addition, for low-income customers of a transmission and distribution utility, the rules must prohibit the utility from: a) charging a restoration or reconnection fee or requiring a security deposit for a restoration of service; and b) charging late fees that accrued prior to the termination or disconnection. As of this update, these rules are not yet in place.

65-407 CMR Ch. 815, § 8; 65-407 CMR Ch. 815, § 10; S.P. 798 – L.D. 1962.

Landlords and Tenants

Tenants, where the landlord is the account holder, shall receive the same protections as other customers.

65-407 CMR Ch. 815, § 10

Availability of Protection Policies

Utilities and public utility commissions are required to provide information on available sources of financial assistance. Additionally, information on customer protections must be sent with all disconnection notices, and when customers sign up for service with a utility. Notice of customer rights will also be sent out for each winter with the first bill after November 1.

65-407 CMR Ch. 815, § 11; 65-407 CMR Ch. 815, § 5, 10