

## New Jersey

Last updated: 9/15/22

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 New Jersey.

N.J.S.A. 48:2-13; N.J.A.C. 14:1-1.3

### Weather Protections

Customers may not be disconnected from their utility service when the forecasted temperature falls below 32 degrees F during the next 24-hour period from November 15<sup>th</sup> through March 15<sup>th</sup> each year. During times of hot weather, disconnections will not take place if temperatures rise above 90 degrees F in the next 48-hour period.

The following groups cannot be disconnected during the winter period under the Winter Termination Program:

- 1) Recipients of benefits under the Lifeline Credit Program;
- 2) Recipients of benefits under the Federal Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), or certified as eligible therefore under standards set by the New Jersey Department of Human Services;
- 3) Recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF);
- 4) Recipients of Federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI);
- 5) Recipients of Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD);
- 6) Recipients of General Assistance (GA) benefits;
- 7) Recipients of the Universal Service Fund (USF); or
- 8) Persons unable to pay their utility bills because of circumstances beyond their control. Such circumstances shall include, but shall not be limited to, unemployment, illness, medically related expenses, recent death of an immediate family member, and any other circumstances, which might cause financial hardship.

All residential electric customers who are eligible for and seek the protection of the Winter Termination Program shall enroll in a budget billing plan on an annual basis. All residential electric customers who are eligible for and seek the protection of the Winter Termination Program shall make good-faith payments during the heating season, if they can do so. Customers who can make a good-faith payment but refuse to do so will be referred to the Board for a determination—until Board makes determination service cannot be discontinued during heating season. All energy related financial assistance shall go directly to utility that is customer's major heat supplier.

N.J.A.C. 14:3-3A.2; N.J.A.C. 14:3-3A.5

### Medical Protections

Disconnections will be delayed for up to 90 days if discontinuance of service will aggravate a medical emergency. Medical certificates can be issued by a licensed medical professional, which is a health care provider with prescriptive authority. This protection can be renewed at least once, with no specified limit on total medical postponement.

To obtain medical protection, a utility may choose to require the customer to provide proof of inability to pay and a medical certificate. If a utility asks for a medical certificate, the certificate should state the existence of the emergency, its nature and probable duration, and that discontinuance of service will aggravate the medical emergency. A medical certificate will be required for a renewal of medical protections.

N.J.A.C. 14:3–1.1; N.J.A.C. 14:3–3A.2; N.J.A.C. 14:3–3A.4

### Other Customer Protections

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

### General Exemptions

Customers and utilities can request an exemption from the rules for reasons of hardship.

N.J.A.C. 14:1-1.2

### Notification Requirements

Written notification of at least 10 days is required from a utility before a customer may be disconnected. An in-person notification should be attempted but notice by telephone is not required. 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.

N.J.A.C. 14:3-3A.3; N.J.A.C. 14:3-3A.4

### Payment Information, Delinquency, and Fee Information

Customers have 20 days to pay their bills before they become past-due.

A utility may disconnect a customer for one or both of the following: the customer's arrearage is more than \$200, and/or the customer's account is more than 3 months in arrears.

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

Utilities may provide customers with payment plans.

N.J.A.C. 14:3-3A.3; N.J.A.C. 14:3-3A.2

### Landlords and Tenants

Where a landlord is the customer for the utilities, both the landlord and tenants must receive 15-day written notice before shutoff.

N.J.A.C. 14:3-3A.6

### Availability of Protection Policies

Utilities and public utility commissions are required to provide information on available sources of financial assistance. A list of protections should also be provided with the disconnection notice.

N.J.A.C. 14:3-3A.3; N.J.A.C. 14:3-3A.4