

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



California

Last updated: January 30, 2023

Covered utilities: These policies pertain to electricity customers who receive their service from an investor-owned utility or electric cooperatives in the State of California. Customers that receive service from a municipal utility are not covered by these policies.

Cal Pub Util Code § 2778; Cal Pub Util Code § 2902; Cal Pub Util Code § 218; Cal Pub Util Code § 216; Cal Pub Util Code § 701.

Weather Protections

Customers may not be disconnected from their utility service when the forecasted temperature falls below 32 degrees F or rises above 100 degrees F based on a 72-hour look-ahead period for the state. Both cold and warm weather protections only apply to investor-owned utilities.

Decision 20-06-003 (page 146)

Medical Protections

Disconnections will not take place if electric service is medically necessary to sustain the life of the person or prevent deterioration of the person’s medical condition. Medical certificates can be issued by a licensed physician, a person licensed pursuant to the Osteopathic Initiative Act, a physician assistant, or a nurse practitioner.

If customers receive medical condition protections, they must enter into a payment agreement with their utility. Utilities will not delay shutoffs if customer notifies their utility that they intend to obtain a medical certificate.

Cal Pub Util Code § 779.3

Other Customer Protections

California requires electric utilities to delay disconnections for up to 180 days (extensions may be granted) to households where customers are military personnel. Utilities must also establish a repayment plan requiring minimum monthly payments that allows military personnel to pay any past due amounts over a reasonable period not to exceed one year after the service members release from active military duty.

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

Cal. Mil. & Vet. Code 827

General Exemptions

Customers and utilities cannot request an exemption from the rules for reasons of hardship.

Municipal utilities are subject to military protections in the State of California. Additionally, only customers who receive service from investor-owned utilities are protected from reconnection fees.

Cal Pub Util Code § 2902; Cal Pub Util Code § 218 and 216, and Cal Pub Util Code § 701; Decision 20-06-003

Notification Requirements

5 days after a written notification is mailed, customers will be given an additional 10 days before a disconnection may take place. In-person or telephone notifications are not required. Utilities are required to delay a disconnection if it is unable to reach a customer by a telephone call or an in-person visit.

Cal. Pub. Util. Code §779.1

Payment Information, Delinquency, and Fee Information

Customers have 19 days to pay their bills before they become past-due. There is no minimum delinquency period before a disconnection can take place.

There are no minimum arrearages before a utility may disconnect a customer.

Customers may be charged reconnection fees unless they receive service from an investor-owned utility.

Utilities may provide customers with payment plans.

Cal. Pub. Util. Code §779.1; Cal Pub Util Code § 779.3; Decision 20-06-003 (page 146); Decision 22-08-037 (page 35)

Landlords and Tenants

If an electric corporation furnishes individually metered residential service to residential occupants, and the owner, manager, or operator of the dwelling is the customer of record, the

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utility provider shall make every good faith effort to inform the residential occupants, by means of written notice, when the account is in arrears, that service will be terminated at least 10 days prior to termination.

The written notice shall further inform the residential occupants that they have the right to become customers, to whom the service will then be billed, without being required to pay any amount which may be due on the delinquent account. The notice shall be in English and in the languages listed in Section 1632 of the Civil Code.

Cal Pub Util Code § 777

Availability of Protection Policies

Disconnection notice must include the procedure for the customer to obtain information on the availability of financial assistance, including private, local, state, or federal sources, if applicable.

Cal. Pub. Util. Code §779.1