

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



Minnesota

Last updated: January 30, 2023

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

Minn. Stat. § 216B.097; M.S.A. § 216B.0975; M.S.A. § 216B.098

Weather Protections

For households that use electricity as a primary heat source, a utility may not disconnect (and must reconnect) utility heating service of a customer whose household income is at or below 50% of the state median income, if the customer enters a mutually acceptable payment agreement with the utility that is based on the financial resources and circumstances of the household. A utility may not require a customer to pay more than 10% of the household income towards current and past utility bills for utility heating service. The Cold Weather Period for this protection is from October 1st to April 30th each year.

Utilities may accept more than 10% of the household income as the payment arrangement amount, only if the customer agrees to it. If a customer’s financial circumstances have changed, or they are no longer able to make timely payments, the customer or a third party may request a modification to the payment agreement itself. The payment agreement terminates at the end of the Cold Weather Period unless a longer period is mutually agreed to by the customer and the utility.

In addition, a utility may not terminate residential electricity services when an excessive heat watch, heat advisory, or excessive heat warning issued by the National Weather Service is in effect during times of hot weather.

Minn. Stat. § 216B.096; Minn. Stat. § 216B.0975

Medical Protections

Disconnections will be delayed for up to 6 months if failure to reconnect or continue service will impair or threaten the health or safety of a resident of the customer’s household. A utility shall reconnect or continue service to a customer’s residence where a medical emergency exists or where medical equipment requiring electricity necessary to sustain life is in use, provided that the utility receives written certification, or initial certification by telephone and written certification within 5 business days. Medical certificates may be issued by a licensed medical

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doctor, a licensed physician's assistant, an advanced practice registered nurse, or a registered nurse.

Renewals for this protection are possible, but it is not specified how many times a customer can receive this protection. Customers who receive medical protections must enter into a payment agreement with their utility provider. The payment agreement must consider the financial circumstances of the household, and it may, at the discretion of the utility, contain a provision by which the utility forgives all or a portion of the amount in which the account is in arrears, which, if implemented, extinguishes individual liability for the amount forgiven.

Minn. Stat. § 216B.098

Other Customer Protections

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

Minn. Stat. § 325E.028; Minn. Stat. § 216B.098

General Exemptions

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

Minn. R. 7820.2900

Notification Requirements

Written notification of at least 5 days (excluding Sundays and federal holidays) is required from a utility before a customer may be disconnected. Telephone notifications are not required, but utilities should make the attempt to notify customers in-person. In addition, 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.

Minn. R. 7820.2400; Minn. R. 7820.2500

Payment Information, Delinquency, and Fee Information

Customers have 25 days to pay their bills. Payments must be received by the next scheduled billing date.

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

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

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Utilities may provide customers with payment plans.

Minn. R. 7820.5300; Minn. R. 7820.2900; MN ADC 7820.2600; Minn. Stat. § 216B.096

Landlords and Tenants

Tenants, where the landlord is the account holder, shall receive the same protections as other customers. In addition, a utility shall not attempt to recover payment from a tenant, or condition service to a tenant, with the payment of any outstanding bills or other charges due upon the outstanding account of the landlord.

Minn. R. 7820.1400

Availability of Protection Policies

Utilities and public utility commissions are required to provide information on available sources of financial assistance. Customers receiving a disconnection notice will be told ways they can avoid disconnection. Additionally, a summary of customer rights must be sent out to every customer between August 15th and October 1st each year.

M.S.A. § 216B.097; Minn. Stat. § 216B.096; Minn. R. 7820.2400; Minn. R. 7820.0200