



Fact Sheet: Disconnection of Service (Water)

All customers are obligated to pay for the utility services they use. If a customer fails to pay a utility bill, Public Service Commission (Commission) rules provide utilities with a variety of tools to address the situation. Some collection options include negotiating a deferred payment agreement (DPA) with the customer, securing the delinquent account with a deposit or disconnecting the customer's service.

Wisconsin Admin. Code § PSC 185.37(11) requires a utility to either mail or personally deliver a written notice to the customer at least ten days before disconnecting service. The notice must include the name and address of the customer, the date and reason for the disconnection, and instructions for the customer to contact the utility if the bill is in dispute or if a payment arrangement is needed. The disconnection notice must also include a statement that service will be continued for up to 21 days with documentation of a medical or protective service emergency. All disconnection notices must include a statement that the customer may contact the Commission if they are unable to resolve a dispute directly with the utility.

In addition to the written notice, utilities are required to make an effort to personally contact the customer prior to disconnecting service. This contact may include a call or call attempt to the customer, a voice mail message left with the customer, a door hanger left at the service address or a knock on the door by the utility technician prior to disconnection. Utilities are also required to keep a record of these contact attempts.

If the billing address is different than the service address, notice shall be posted at each individual dwelling unit of the service address not less than five days before disconnection. The dated notice must contain the proposed date of disconnection and that, if feasible, the occupants may apply to accept responsibility for future bills to avoid disconnection of service.

If the disconnection is not completed by the 20th day after issuance of the notice, a subsequent written notice must be left at the customer's premises. The notice, commonly referred to as a "door hanger", must be posted at the premises no less than 24 hours and no more than 48 hours prior to disconnection.

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In certain circumstances, utilities may disconnect service after providing very limited or no notice. Electric, gas and water utilities may disconnect service without notice where a dangerous condition exists for as long as it exists or if the utility believes the customer is using unsafe devices or methods to obtain service. Water utilities may disconnect service with a written 24-hour notice for nonpayment of a bill covering theft of water.

The Commission recognizes that there are many citizens of the state who, because of income, infirmities of aging, developmental or mental disabilities or the frailties associated with being very young, need protection from cold weather disconnections of electric, gas or water service. In general terms, disconnection of utility service is prohibited between November 1st and April 15th if it provides the primary heat source (or energy source affecting the primary heat source) to a residential premises. If water service is not used as the primary heat source, disconnection may occur throughout the year. Otherwise, utility service used for home heating may be disconnected between April 16th and October 31st if a customer has not made satisfactory payment arrangements with the utility.

For more information, please visit the PSC website at psc.wi.gov.