



# YOUR RIGHTS & PROTECTIONS AS AN ELECTRIC OR NATURAL GAS CUSTOMER

The New York State Home Energy Fair Practices Act (HEFPA) provides comprehensive consumer protections to residential customers regarding electric and natural gas utility service.



## Special Protections

HEFPA provides special protections and shut off procedures for circumstances where customer health and safety may be threatened by lack of service.

### Cold Weather Protections

Between November 1 and April 15, your provider must make a special effort to determine whether terminating heat-related service will result in serious impairment to your health or safety.

### Medical Emergencies

If you or someone in your household has a serious illness or medical condition that will be aggravated by the termination of utility service, your service may not be shut off if you get a certification by a doctor or local board of health. If your condition continues for more than 30 days, the doctor may be required to renew the certificate, and you will need to demonstrate your inability to pay. If the electric or gas service is required to operate a life-support system, the medical certificate remains in effect until terminated by the PSC. However, every three months, you must show your provider why you can't pay your bill. Your provider will code your account to ensure service is maintained at your residence.

### Elderly, Blind and Disabled

If you are blind, disabled or 62 or older and all remaining residents of your household are 62 or older, 18 or younger, or blind or disabled, your utility will make special attempts to contact you before and after shutting off your service. You must notify your utility if you meet the qualifications so that service will not be terminated by mistake.

For more information, visit  
[www.AskPSC.com](http://www.AskPSC.com)  
or call **1-888-AskPSC1** toll-free.  
NYS Public Service Commission  
Three Empire State Plaza  
Albany, NY 12223-1350



# YOUR RIGHTS & PROTECTIONS

- You must be provided with utility service within five business days of your application, subject to certain conditions.
- You must be given a summary of rights and obligations when service is initiated and at least annually thereafter. A copy of customers' rights is also online at [www.AskPSC.com](http://www.AskPSC.com).
- A toll-free **Emergency HOTLINE (1-800-342-3355)** is open from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on business days to assist you regarding initiation, threat of termination, or reconnection of service.
- Security deposits are generally prohibited and, if allowed, you may pay them in installments up to 12 months.
- Late payment charges on unpaid balances are limited to no more than 1.5% monthly (18% annually).
- You must be given the option to pay overdue bills in reasonable installments.
- You must be offered budget (or levelized) billing.
- You may designate a relative or friend to receive copies of notices relating to service termination or other credit actions.



## Disconnections & Inquiries

The PSC will investigate and resolve complaints about residential electric and natural gas service. For disconnection or threat of disconnection, call **1-800-342-3355**. For all other complaints or inquiries, call **1-800-342-3377**.

- If you have a dispute and you file a complaint with the Public Service Commission (PSC), your service cannot be shut off for the disputed amount while the complaint is being resolved and you are paying the non-disputed amount.
- If you are on a fixed income, you may have your bill due date adjusted by contacting your service provider.



## Termination of Service

If you receive a final notice of termination:

- Call your utility first to try to make a payment agreement that is reasonable and affordable.
- If you are unable to make an arrangement, call the PSC's toll-free Emergency HOTLINE at **1-800-342-3355** for assistance.

## Electric or Natural Gas Service Shutoffs

- If you fail to pay overdue bills, your electric or gas service may be shut off. However, your service may not be disconnected unless your provider has given you a final notice in writing that it plans to shut off your service and has waited 15 days to allow you to pay the overdue bill or make a payment agreement on the overdue amount.
- Shutoffs are only permitted between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday, excluding holidays, the day before a holiday and the two-week period encompassing Christmas and New Year's Day.
- If you live in an apartment building or a two-family house and your landlord is responsible but fails to pay the electric or gas bill for the building, the utility must advise you of the landlord's non-payment and the utility's intention to shut off service. The notice will tell you how to contact the utility so that it can help you and other tenants work out a way to avoid service disconnection, even if the landlord refuses to make payments.