

AVOIDING SHUT OFF OF ELECTRIC SERVICE FOR NONPAYMENT

1. What can I do if I receive a notice from Prairie Energy Cooperative (PECO) that says my service will be shut off because I have a past due bill?

- Pay the bill in full; or
- Enter into a reasonable payment plan with PECO (see #2 below); or
- Apply for and become eligible for low-income energy assistance (see #3 below); or
- Give PECO a written statement from a doctor or public health official stating that shutting off your electric service would pose an "especial" health danger for a person living at the residence (see #4 below); or
- Tell PECO if you think part of the amount shown on the bill is wrong. However, you must still pay the part of the bill you agree you owe PECO (see #5 below).

2. How do I go about making a reasonable payment plan? (Residential Customers Only)

- Contact PECO as soon as you know you cannot pay the amount you owe. If you cannot pay all the money you owe at one time, PECO may offer you a payment plan that spreads payments evenly over at least twelve months. The plan may be longer depending on your financial situation.
- If you have not made the payments you promised in a previous payment plan with PECO and still owe money, you may qualify for a second payment agreement under certain conditions.
- If you do not make the payments you promise, PECO may shut off your utility service on one day's notice unless all the money you owe PECO is paid or you enter into another payment agreement.

3. How do I apply for low-income energy assistance? (Residential Customers Only)

- Contact the local community action agency in your area (see below); or;
- Contact the Division of Community Action Agencies at the Iowa Department of Human Rights, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines, Iowa 50319; telephone (515)281-0859. To prevent disconnection, you must contact PECO prior to disconnection of your service.
- To avoid disconnection, you must apply for energy assistance before your service is shut off. Notify PECO that you may be eligible and have applied for energy assistance. Once your service has been disconnected, it will not be reconnected based on approval for energy assistance.
- Being certified eligible for energy assistance will prevent your service from being disconnected from November 1 through April 1.

4. What if someone living at the residence has a serious health condition? (Residential Customers Only)

Contact PECO if you believe this is the case. Contact your doctor or a public health official and ask the doctor or health official to contact PECO and state that shutting off your utility service would pose an especial health danger for a person living at your residence. The doctor or public health official must provide a written statement to the PECO office within five days of when your doctor or public health official notifies PECO of the health condition; otherwise, your utility service may be shut off. If PECO receives this written statement, your service will not be shut off for 30 days. This 30-day delay is to allow you time to arrange payment of your utility bill or find other living arrangements. After 30 days, your service may be shut off if payment arrangements have not been made.

5. What should I do if I believe my bill is not correct?

You may dispute your utility bill. You must tell PECO that you dispute the bill. You must pay the part of the bill you think is correct. If you do this, PECO will not shut off your service for 45 days from the date the bill was mailed while you and PECO work out the dispute over the part of the bill you think is incorrect. You may ask the Iowa Utilities Board for assistance in resolving the dispute (see #9 below).

6. When can PECO shut off my utility service because I have not paid my bill?

- PECO can shut off service between the hours of 6 a.m. and 2 p.m., Monday through Friday.
- PECO will not shut off your service on nights, weekends or holidays for nonpayment of a bill.
- PECO will not shut off your service if you enter into a reasonable payment plan to pay the overdue amount (see #2 above).
- PECO will not shut off your service if the temperature is forecasted to be 20 degrees Fahrenheit or colder during the following 24-hour period, including the day your service is scheduled to be shut off.
- If you have qualified for low-income energy assistance, PECO cannot shut off your service from November 1 through April 1. However, you will still owe the utility for the service used during this time.
- PECO will not shut off your service if you have notified PECO that you dispute a portion of your bill and you pay the part of the bill that you agree is correct.
- If one of the heads of household is a service member deployed for military service, utility service cannot be shut off during the deployment or within 90 days after the end of deployment. For this exception to disconnection to apply, the utility must be informed of the deployment prior to disconnection. However, you will still owe the utility for service used during this time.

7. How will I be told PECO is going to shut off my service?

- You must be given a written notice at least 12 days before PECO service can be shut off for nonpayment. This notice will include the reason for shutting off your service.
- If you have not made payments required by an agreed-upon payment plan, you may be disconnected with only one day notice.
- PECO must also try to reach you by telephone or in person before it shuts off your service. From November 1 through April 1, if PECO cannot reach you by telephone or in person, PECO will put a written notice on the door (or in another conspicuous location on the premise if posting on the door is not practical) of your residence to tell you that your utility service will be shut off.

8. If service is shut off, when will it be turned back on?

- PECO will turn your service back on if you pay the whole amount you owe or agree to a reasonable payment plan (see #2 above).
- If you make your payment during regular business hours, PECO must make a reasonable effort to turn your service back on that day. If service cannot reasonably be turned on that same day, PECO must do it by 11 a.m. the next day.
- PECO may charge you a fee to turn your service back on. Those fees may be higher in the evening or on weekends, so you may ask that your service be turned on during normal PECO business hours.

9. Is there any other help available besides PECO?

If PECO has not been able to help you with your problem, you may contact the Iowa Utilities Board toll-free at 1-877-565-4450. You may also write the Iowa Utilities Board at 1375 E Court Ave Room 69, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0069, or by email at iubcustomer@iub.state.ia.us. Low-income customers may also be eligible for free legal assistance from Iowa Legal Aid and may contact Legal Aid at 1-800-532-1275.

Upper Des Moines Opportunity, Inc.:

Hamilton County
626 2nd Street
Webster City, IA 50595
515-832-6451

Humboldt County
Humboldt County
Court House
Dakota City, IA 50525
515-332-3631

Webster County
918 1st Avenue South
Fort Dodge, IA 50501
515-576-7774

Wright County
113 W. Broadway
Eagle Grove, IA 50533
515-448-3704

North Iowa Community Action:

Cerro Gordo County
1190 Briarstone Dr
Suite 2
Mason City IA 50401
641-423-7766 or
800-873-1899

**Hancock County &
Winnebago County**
215 South 4th St.
PO Box 331
Forest City IA 50436
641-585-5863 or
800-873-1899

Kossuth County
117 East Call
PO Box 98
Algona IA 50511
515-295-2531
or 800-873-1899

TO DISCUSS THIS WITH PRAIRIE ENERGY COOPERATIVE, call 515-532-2805, or 800-728-0013. Phones are answered 24 hours a day. Payment arrangements, however, must be made during office hours: 7:30-4:00, Monday through Friday. A night depository is available at our Clarion office.