

**NOTICE TO CUSTOMERS**

**MINNESOTA'S COLD WEATHER RULE**

Bills can pile up just like the snow. But the Minnesota Cold Weather Rule is designed to protect people who may have trouble paying their utility bills in the winter. The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule applies from **OCTOBER 15 TO APRIL 15**. The Rule means that your utility company cannot disconnect your residential electric service during the winter ***IF*** the customer meets ***ALL*** of the following requirements:

**Requirement 1:** The customer has completed and returned to the utility office the “Application for Winter Disconnect Protection” form. Documentation of your income must be included with the application

**Requirement 2:** The household income of the customer is at or below 50% of the state median household income. A customer is deemed to meet the income requirements of the clause if the customer receives any form of public assistance, including energy assistance.

**Requirement 3:** A customer enters into and makes reasonable, timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household.

**Requirement 4:** The residential customer, or any designated third party, requests the ten percent plan and is income eligible. To request the ten percent plan, the residential customer must pay the utility at least the lesser of the following amounts:

- a. Ten percent of the residential customer’s monthly income; or
- b. The full amount of the current month’s utility bill not including arrearages.

The ten percent plan will take into consideration of all energy costs paid by the customer. 70% of the 10% amount will be allowed for the greater energy provider and 30% of the 10% amount will be allowed for the lesser provider.

If you have trouble paying your utility bill, local agencies may be able to provide payment assistance. The Department of Human Services recommends that you contact the agencies listed below.

PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES – 387-3620

ARROWHEAD ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY AGENCY – 218-387-4547 or 1-800-662-5711

*If you know you’re going to have trouble paying your utility bills, PLEASE complete the enclosed APPLICATION FOR WINTER DISCONNECT PROTECTION forms provided with this notice prior to a disconnect order.*

## **RIGHT TO DISPUTE YOUR BILL**

If for any reason you believe your bill is wrong, you may call or write to the Commission and explain the amount you believe to be in error and the reason you believe there has been an error. This claim must be made within 10 days of the receipt of the bill you wish to dispute. You must continue to pay any charges you are not disputing.

After you receive the decision of the Commission, you may still consider the bill wrong or you may still remain unsatisfied. If so, you have the right to appeal to the Public Utilities Board by calling or writing the Board to request a hearing.

BOARD: Grand Marais Public Utilities Impartial Hearing Board  
ADDRESS: PO Box 600  
Grand Marais, MN 55604  
PHONE: 218-387-1848

## **RIGHT TO APPEAL PAYMENT PLANS**

### TEN PERCENT PLAN:

The utility shall provide the residential customer and any designated third party with the right to appeal to the commission when the utility and residential customer are unable to agree on the timeliness of the payment or the prorating among multiple utilities under the ten percent payment plan. Any appeal must be made in writing within TEN days after the residential customer's receipt by first class mail the decision of the utility.

The utility shall not disconnect service while an appeal is pending. If no appeal is made by the residential customer or designated third party and the residential customer has been determined to be ineligible for the ten percent plan, the utility may disconnect service.

### PAYMENT SCHEDULE:

The utility shall provide the residential customer and any designated third party with the right to appeal to the commission when the utility and residential customer are unable to agree on a reasonable payment schedule, the modification to an existing payment schedule or on the reasonable timeliness of the payments under a payment schedule. Any appeal must be made in writing within TEN days after the residential customer's receipt by first class mail of the decision of the utility.

The utility shall not disconnect service while an appeal involving payment schedules is pending. If no appeal is made by the residential customer or designated third party and the residential customer has been determined to have the ability to pay the utility bill, the utility may disconnect service.

**COLD WEATHER RULE****APPLICATION FOR WINTER DISCONNECT PROTECTION**

Please read the enclosed notice of customer rights and responsibilities **before** completing this form.

IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO PAY YOUR UTILITY BILLS AND NEED COLD WEATHER PROTECTION FROM A UTILITY SHUTOFF, FILL OUT THIS FORM AND RETURN IT TO YOUR UTILITY IMMEDIATELY. THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION COLD WEATHER RULE PROVIDES THAT A UTILITY CANNOT DISCONNECT A RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER FOR NONPAYMENT IF YOU ENTERED INTO AN ARRANGEMENT WITH THE UTILITY.

**FILL OUT FORM COMPLETELY** - please print.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

SERVICE ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: HOME \_\_\_\_\_ WORK \_\_\_\_\_ (optional)

ACCOUNT NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ AMOUNT OWED \_\_\_\_\_

Total annual (yearly) household income \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (You may be asked to provide copies of your income.)

Sources of income (circle appropriate sources)

Employment

AFCD/GA

Unemployment

Disability/Social Security/Pension

SSI/Food Stamps/MSA

GA Medical Care/Minnesota Care

Child Support/Alimony

(I do not pay for any of my medical expenses)

Other - please explain \_\_\_\_\_

Number of persons in household (include yourself) \_\_\_\_\_

Please note if a utility disconnect would seriously affect a medical problem within the household or affect necessary medical equipment within the dwelling. \_\_\_\_\_

**IMPORTANT**  
**YOU MUST COMPLETE THE PAYMENT PLAN AND SIGN THE BACK OF THIS FORM**

**PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS**

You have the option of two (2) payment plans listed below. Understand that any payment agreement entered into must be “mutually acceptable” by both parties. The utility commission has the right to reject what they feel is an unacceptable payment schedule. You have the right to appeal the commission decision and **must do so within 10 days of the receipt of the notice** in writing to:

Grand Marais Public Utilities Commission  
Cold Weather Rule Appeal  
PO Box 600  
Grand Marais, MN 55604

**You will not be disconnected during the appeal process.**

**Inability to Pay Schedule**

I propose to pay my CURRENT CHARGES according to the following schedule of payments:

- \$ \_\_\_\_\_ by (date) \_\_\_\_\_

**Ten Percent (10%) Pay Schedule**

I propose to pay ten percent (10%) of my monthly household income towards my outstanding and future bills on the stated date each month. \_\_\_\_\_. I understand that in the case that my monthly household income should change significantly, I will immediately notify the utility.

**By signing this form, I hereby acknowledge that I have received, read and understand the enclosed Notice of Customer’s Rights and Possible Assistance. I declare that the above information is true and correct. I give my permission to any energy provider or public assistance agency that serves me to exchange income and billing information with other energy providers and the public utilities commission for the purpose of program qualification.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Customer Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

If you are the “Third Party” for the customer whose service is affected by this notice and are submitting this for that customer, please sign below.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Third Party Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date