

RESIDENTIAL UTILITY CUSTOMER PROTECTIONS

(Effective March 16, 2023)¹

Established by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU)

If you are having trouble paying your utility bill or are at risk of having your service turned off, you may qualify for help through a utility payment assistance program administered by the State of New Jersey. Learn more by calling your utility company or dialing 2-1-1. Information on programs such as the Winter Termination Program and the Universal Service Fund is also available online at www.nj211.org/utility-assistance-programs. If you have questions or concerns about any of the rights explained in this document, call your utility company. If the utility company is unable to help you or if you have a complaint about your utility company, you can then contact the BPU Division of Customer Assistance at 800-624-0241 or online at <https://www.nj.gov/bpu/assistance/>.

1. You have the right to safe, adequate, and proper utility service if you are a qualified applicant.
2. You are not required to pay an unreasonable deposit amount in order to receive utility service.
3. You have the right to a “budget billing plan” with your utility company if you are a residential electric, gas, water, and/or wastewater utility customer. This is a plan that allows you to pay a set amount each month for a set period of time.
4. You have the right to at least one “deferred payment plan” per year with your utility company if you have an outstanding bill you cannot pay. This is a plan that considers your financial situation and allows you to make payments on the outstanding bill as long as you stay current with payments on any new charges.
5. You have the right to dispute a charge on your utility bill with the utility company. As long as you pay the amount not in dispute, your utility service may not be turned off while the utility company investigates the disputed charge.
6. You have the right to have your meter tested by your utility company free of charge once every 12 months if you think it is not working properly. You may request a BPU employee be there when the utility company is doing the test.
7. You have the right to at least 10 days written notice from your utility company before your utility service may be turned off for non-payment. Your service may be turned off after that time if you do not make a reasonable payment toward what you owe or if you do not agree to a payment plan with your utility company.

¹ Based on order issued by BPU issued March 6, 2023

8. You have a right to reasonable advance notice from the utility company before your service can be suspended or turned off for reasons other than non-payment.
9. Unless there is a safety-related emergency, a utility company may not suspend or turn off utility service outside the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday.
10. Unless there is a safety-related emergency, a utility company may not suspend or turn off utility service on a Friday, Saturday, Sunday, a New Jersey State holiday or the day before a New Jersey State holiday, or if a valid medical emergency exists in your household.
11. If you are a customer eligible for protection under the Winter Termination Program, you have the right to utility services from November 15 to March 15. You must notify your utility company of your eligibility under this protection.
12. If you live in a multi-family dwelling unit, you have the right to receive notice if the utility company plans on turning off service to the building. The utility company must either post a notice in a common area and/or send the notice to you as an occupant of the dwelling.
13. If the amount of electricity, gas, water, or wastewater shown on your utility bill appears unexplainably high or suspicious, you have the right to have the utility company perform a "diversion of service" investigation on your behalf.
14. You have the right to continue receiving utility service as long as you pay the charges for the utility service you received. A utility company may not send you notice threatening to turn off your utility service based on extra charges.
15. You have the right to have your deposit returned to you once you close your account and the final bill is settled. The utility company must give you the choice between having your deposit applied to your account as a credit or as a separate check.
16. You should not be assessed a late payment charge on your residential customer utility bill.²

² Brightspeed provides you with the citation for the definition of "utility" - See NJSA 48:3-2.3.