

Keeping Utilities On During the COVID-19 Crisis

(Updated 4/7/2021)



I can't afford my gas, electric, and/or water bills because of COVID-19. Will my service be shut off?

Maybe. Because the Winter Moratorium has ended, utility companies can start sending disconnection notices but when you will be disconnected depends on how much money you owe. There are various consumer protections in place through **June 30, 2021** for Chicago residents who have not been able to keep up with their utility bills. This means that **you may not be disconnected right away, or you may be able to avoid disconnection altogether, but you must act quickly. In order to avoid utility shut-off, you should call your utility providers as soon as possible to set up a payment plan.**

I'm behind on my utility bills. What can I do to keep my utilities on?

Call your utility providers now and ask about bill payment assistance. There is help available from the utility companies, city and state government, LIHEAP, and local community agencies.

Deferred Payment Agreements (DPA) for customers of Ameren Illinois, Aqua Illinois, ComEd, Ill. American Water Co., Nicor Gas, Utilities Services of Ill., North Shore Gas, and Peoples Gas:

- Households earning 300% or less of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) can get in an agreement to pay the past due balance over 18 months with \$0 down.
- All households may pay the past due balance over 18 months, with 10% down.
- Through July 31, Nicor customers can arrange to pay their past due balance over 24 months.
- All customers may renegotiate their DPA at least once with no penalty.
- Households who enter into a payment plan will not be disconnected before **July 1, 2021** (even if they miss a payment), allowing time to find bill payment assistance and to renegotiate the DPA.

What should I do if my service is already off?

Before July 10, 2021, customers up to 300% of the federal poverty level can get reconnected by paying 25% of what they owe. Customers above 300% of the federal poverty level must pay 100% of what's owed to get reconnected, but they may qualify for other financial assistance.

Bill Payment Assistance and other assistance program, including LIHEAP's Reconnection Assistance, can help you pay the amount needed to get your service turned back on. For more information about Reconnection Assistance, visit www.cedaorg.net or call **1-800-571-2332**. **Please note that unless the water department is a public utility, they are not required to reconnect you unless you pay 100% of what you owe on past bills.**

Low Income Home Energy Assistance program (LIHEAP)

LIHEAP is a federally-funded energy assistance program which helps low-income families meet their energy needs. The program runs from July 27, 2020 to June 30, 2021, or until funds run out. For more information, call **877-411-9276** or visit liheapillinois.com.

City of Chicago Department of Water offers payment plans and has a Utility Billing Relief program (UBR). To apply, contact the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook County (CEDA) at **1-800-571-2332** or check online at cedaorg.net/find-services/utility-billing-relief/.



Call

312.341.1070

Monday to Friday
between 8 AM and 4:30 PM

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What other programs are available to help me keep up with my utility bills during COVID-19?

- Bill Payment Assistance – one-time grant of up to \$500 from ComEd, Peoples Gas, and Nicor Gas.
 - More information on ComEd's Bill Payment Assistance:
comed.com/MyAccount/CustomerSupport/Pages/BillAssistanceForm.aspx
 - More information on assistance for Peoples Gas:
wecenergygroup.com/home/message/pgl-covid-payment-relief.htm
 - More information on Nicor Gas' assistance:
nicorgas.com/residential/billingandpaymentoptions/energy-assistance-programs.html
- ComEd's Payment Assistance programs – up to \$500 for people experiencing a hardship or more in these special cases:
 - CHAMP – up to \$1,000 for military personnel (deployed members, national guard, reserves, and honorably discharged veterans).
 - Residential Special Hardship - up to \$500
 - Small Business Assistance – up to \$1,000
 - Non-Profit Special Hardship – up to \$2,000
 - More information on ComEd's program here:
comed.com/MyAccount/CustomerSupport/Pages/BillPaymentAssistance.aspx
- Federal rental and utility assistance is expected to become available soon. For more information, go to: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/emergency-rental-assistance-program>

You should contact your utility provider directly to apply for bill payment assistance and for payment plans.

- ComEd- 1-800-334-7661
- Peoples Gas - 866-556-6001
- Nicor Gas - 888.642.6748
- City of Chicago Department of Water - 312.744.4420

I need help paying my utility bills but I'm worried that I will need to disclose my immigration status in order to get help. Is this true?

Please note, utilities are not allowed to ask customers who seek assistance to prove legal residency or immigration status.

Immigrants can apply for LIHEAP through state funding.



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