

A utility must send you a notice before your service is shut off for non-payment. This notice must include:

- Reasons for the shut-off.
- Date when service can be shut off.
- How to contact the utility about the shut off.

The notice should be mailed to your home or mailing address at least eight days before the shut-off. A notice must also be posted at the service address if it is not the same as your home or mailing address. The utility is also required to make a reasonable attempt to contact you by telephone or in person before the service is shut off.

If service is not shut off within 15 days after the notice is mailed, the utility must:

- Leave a new notice at the site 24 (but not more than 48) hours before the service is shut off.

### SPECIAL MEDICAL PROBLEMS

For extra time to make payment arrangements, the utility will delay service shut-off, or restore service if shut off, for up to 21 days if there is a medical problem or other crisis. The utility may ask for a letter about the crisis from you:

- Doctor
- Public health official
- Social service official
- Police or sheriff

It is also possible to extend the 21-day delay.

### THIRD PARTY SHUT-OFF NOTICE

You can ask the utility to send a copy of your shutoff notice to a relative, guardian, or other third party.

### WINTER SHUT-OFF RULES

If there is no threat to human health or life, a utility can shut off service from November 1 - April 15. A utility can also shut off service from November 1 - April 15 if a household income is greater than 250 percent of the Federal Poverty level guidelines.

Before service can be shut off, a utility must:

- Obtain written approval from their vice president or higher executive.
- Deliver this written approval to the PSCW by 3:30 p.m. the day service is to be shut off.
  
- Visit the site the next day where service has been shut off to:
  - 1) Check customer's well-being.
  - 2) Tell the customer about payment plans.
  - 3) Tell the customer about special assistance.

These rules also apply to business and farm accounts serving residential dwellings. Before winter, a utility must attempt to contact customers whose service was shut off for nonpayment of bills.

Each utility makes a special effort to turn on service before it gets cold. If you know of someone who has no heat, call your utility. You do not have to give your name. If service is not turned on in a reasonable time, call the PSCW.

### HAVE A DISPUTE?

First contact your utility to try to solve the problem. If you are behind on your bill, the utility may offer you an installment plan to pay your bill.

If the utility cannot solve your problem, call the PSCW at **1-800-225-7729**. While the PSCW reviews your dispute, your service should not be shut off. However, you must still promptly pay any charge not in dispute. After the PSCW completes its review, a staff member will contact you and your utility and will attempt to find an agreement that is acceptable to all parties.

### BILINGUAL SERVICE

The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is also able to provide customer assistance in Spanish. When calling the PSCW, please ask to speak to a Spanish speaking representative.

### SERVICIO BILLINGÜE

En la Comisión de Servicios Públicos del estado de Wisconsin (PSCW) podemos asistirle en Español. Cuando llame a la PSCW, pida hablar con un representante de habla hispana.

### SAFETY NOTE

In order to prevent severe burns and unnecessary energy consumption, water heater thermostats should be set no higher than 125 degrees.

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The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the provision of programs, services, or employment. If you are speech, hearing, or visually impaired and need assistance, call (608) 266-5481 or TTY (608) 267-1479. We will try to find another way to get the information to you in a usable form.

### Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

4822 Madison Yards Way  
PO Box 7854  
Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7854

General (608) 266-5481 / 888-816-3831  
TTY (608) 267-1479 / 800-251-8345  
Consumer Affairs 608-266-2001 / (800) 225-7729  
Fax (608) 266-3957

Web Site <http://PSCW.wi.gov>



## YOUR BILL OF RIGHTS AS A RESIDENTIAL GAS UTILITYCUSTOMER

### MIDWEST NATURAL GAS OFFICE LOCATIONS:

3600 HWY. 157  
LA CROSSE WI 54601  
608-781-1011

229 BLACK RIVER AVENUE  
WESTBY WI 54667  
608-634-4617

611 SHAY STREET  
SOMERSET WI 54025  
715-247-5279

23389 WHITEHALL RD.  
INDEPENDENCE WI 54747  
715-985-5500

## ENERGY USAGE REPORTS

Before you buy/rent a home or an apartment, call Midwest Natural Gas, Inc. We can give you an average of how much energy was used at the new address during the last 12 months. Or, we can tell you the largest and smallest bills for the last 12 months.

## PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION (ID)

Before you open an account, a utility may ask you to show an ID. Some types of valid ID include:

- Photo ID Card
- US Military Card
- Bank Statements
- Social Service agency letter ID
- Driver's License
- Current utility bills
- Rental Agreement
- Employment letter ID

## DEPOSITS

1. If you are a new residential customer you may be asked to post a deposit if:
  - You did not pay an undisputed bill for the same type of service anywhere in Wisconsin during the last six years.
2. If you are a current residential customer, you may be asked to post a deposit if:
  - Your service was shut off during the last 12 months for non-payment.
  - You falsified a service application.
  - Your payment for service from November 1-April 15 is 80 days or more overdue and you have the ability to pay.
3. You do not have to post a deposit if your income is below 200 percent of the Federal Poverty level guidelines.

A normal deposit is the sum of the two largest consecutive bills during the last 12 months:

*Example:*

January .....	\$225
February..... +	<u>\$200</u>
	\$425 deposit

The deposit for those who are able to pay their winter heating bill but do not, is the sum of the four largest consecutive bills during the last 12 months:

*Example:*

December.....	\$200
January .....	\$225
February .....	\$200
March..... +	<u>\$150</u>
	\$775 deposit

A utility must pay you interest on your deposit. Each year the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSCW) sets a new interest rate. Your deposit and any interest earned must be returned to you after you have paid your utility bills promptly for 12 consecutive months.

## MONTHLY BILLS

You will be sent a monthly bill every 25-35 days. To avoid a late payment charge or shut-off notice, pay your bill by the date printed on your bill.

## WHAT'S ON YOUR BILLS?

All bills include:

- Customer name
- Billing address
- Service address (if not the same as the billing address)
- Current meter reading and date
- Prior meter reading and date
- Number of gas units used
- If it was an estimated reading
- Next meter reading date
- Number of days billed
- Class of service
- Amount due
- Tax

## METER READINGS

The PSCW requires utilities to read your meter at least once each six months. You must allow these readings.

If a meter reader cannot get to your meter, you will get an estimated bill. To avoid estimated readings, you can read your own meter. Ask your utility for a card to record your reading.

## LATE PAYMENT CHARGES

A utility can add a late payment charge if your bill is not paid by the due date printed on your bill.

A late payment charge can be:

- A one-time charge of 3 percent of current unpaid charges (minimum \$.50), OR
- A monthly charge of up to 1 percent of the total unpaid balance (including unpaid late payment charges).

## OTHER CHARGES

Some customers are able to pay their winter heating bills but do not. A utility may take legal action to collect payment from these customers and may report the unpaid bills to a credit bureau. These customers may also have to pay the utility's cost of collecting monthly payments.

## BUDGET PAYMENT PLANS

To manage high winter gas bills, ask your utility about budget payment plans. This allows you to average estimated annual use into even monthly payments. Each six months your payment amount is readjusted to reflect your actual use. At the end of a budget year, your bill is adjusted to

correct any overbilling or underbilling. These payment plans are available to all residential gas customers, even if in arrears.

## INSTALLMENT PLANS FOR OVERDUE BILLS

You may use an installment plan to pay what you owe your utility. This helps you pay your current bills and any overdue bills. You will be asked to make a "fair" down payment and "fair" installments. A "fair" amount is based on:

- Your ability to pay
- The size of your overdue bill
- How long your bill has been overdue
- Your payment history
- Reasons your bill is overdue
- Other important factors

Your utility may ask you to sign an installment agreement. Do not sign it unless you agree to the terms. You have the right to negotiate an installment agreement.

If you do not pay your utility installments as agreed, the utility may shut off your service. If you do not pay, the utility does not have to renegotiate an agreement before it shuts off your service. It is up to you to let the utility know about important reasons to negotiate a new plan.

If you and a utility cannot agree on an installment plan, you can file a dispute with the PSCW. While the PSCW reviews your dispute, your service should not be shut off. However, you must pay all bills not in dispute.

## CREDIT REPORTING

If an account becomes due and no payment arrangements have been established between the customer and a utility, the utility may report the account to a credit bureau. It may also use the services of a collection agency to collect on the account.

## SERVICE DISCONNECTS

Your service can be shut off if:

- You fail to pay your bills.
- You fail to pay installments as agreed
- You fail to post required deposit.
- A prior customer living at your address has an unpaid bill for the same address.
- You fail to pay the utility's cost for collecting an overdue bill.
- You tamper with your meter.
- There is a safety hazard.

A utility is permitted to transfer a landlord's unpaid bill from a rental residential property to the office or home of the landlord or property manager. If the bill continues to go unpaid, service can be shut off at the landlord's or property manager's office or home.