



Several Illinois Electric and Gas Utilities Commit to Greater Winter Protections for Residential Customers

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Ameren
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**Alton
Operating Center**
700 OAKWOOD

CHICAGO - Over the last week, several Illinois utilities have announced that they voluntarily ceased disconnections for all residential customers through the winter months. The voluntary moratorium on residential disconnections applies to customers of Ameren Illinois, ComEd, Liberty Utilities, Nicor, North Shore and Peoples Gas, providing greater protection to all residential customers than the statutory winter rules scheduled to take effect on December 1, 2020.

“Difficult times lie ahead in Illinois as we are experiencing a dangerous second wave of COVID-19 cases. The growing concerns of this virus have prompted the state’s largest gas and electric utilities to voluntarily stop disconnections for all residential customers immediately,” said Illinois Commerce Commission Chairman Carrie K. Zalewski. “We all must do as much as we can to stop the spread of COVID-19 and encourage each other to stay home and stay safe. I commend the utility companies who have stepped up to provide this needed protection for all of their residential customers.”

In a normal year, the winter rules do not apply to water utilities. This year, Aqua Illinois, Illinois American Water and Utility Services of Illinois have agreed to cease disconnections of participants in the State’s Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) or Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) and those who self-report to the utility that they are suffering financial or COVID-19 related hardship until March 31, 2021. For this protection, it is critical that LIHEAP and PIPP customers proactively contact their water utility to let them know about their status as participants in those programs. Likewise, all other water customers who are struggling with hardships during the pandemic must contact the water utility to self-report that hardship status in order to avoid disconnection.

Stipulated agreements reached between the utilities, consumer advocate groups and the ICC have also put into place bill payment assistance programs and extended deferred payment arrangements (DPAs) that vary by utility. Through December 26, 2020, residential customers can enter into longer DPAs with smaller down payments. To receive assistance benefits and to prevent disconnection, customers need to act quickly by calling the utility and verbalizing their hardship situation.

For more information about LIHEAP and PIPP eligibility and how to apply, visit the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Utility Assistance page at <https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/CommunityServices/UtilityBillAssistance/Pages/default.aspx/>.

For information about the ICC’s response to COVID-19, visit <https://www.icc.illinois.gov/home/covid-19>.