

**Important information
regarding winter heating bills**

MINNESOTA COLD WEATHER LAW

The Cold Weather Law does not totally forbid winter cutoffs. If you receive a disconnection notice between October 15 and April 15, you must act promptly.



Your Touchstone Energy® Partner 

77100 US Highway 71, P.O. Box 69
Jackson MN 56143

Business Hours
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday
507-728-8366 • 507-847-3520
1-800-321-3520
info@federatedrea.coop

REVIEW THESE LOW COST/NO COST ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIPS:

- Caulk and weather strip cracks around doors and window frames. Block openings at bottom of doors to prevent drafts.
- Lower the setting on your thermostat at night and dress warmly.
- Lower the setting on your water heater to 120 degrees F (normal/medium).
- Run dishwasher only when it is full.
- Open shades during winter days to let the warm sunlight in and close the shades at night.
- Wash clothes with warm water and rinse them in cold water.
- Leaking faucets should be repaired promptly, especially hot water.
- Turn off all unused lights and appliances.
- Close all windows tightly and use locks to prevent cold air leaking in. Cover all windows with plastic.
- Broken windows should be repaired immediately and close all storm windows.
- Window air conditioning units should be covered or removed during the heating season.
- Furnace filters should be kept clean.
- Furnaces should be checked for safe and efficient operation at least once a year.
- Vacuum refrigerator and freezer coils every six months to improve efficiency.
- Close off unused rooms.



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NOTICE OF RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER RIGHTS AND POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE:

This notice informs you of your rights and responsibilities under the Cold Weather Law. It is designed to help you with high winter electric bills. To take advantage, you must act **PROMPTLY**. If you choose not to assert your rights or choose not to enter a mutually acceptable payment plan, your service may be disconnected.

An electric cooperative utility must not disconnect and must reconnect the utility service of a home between October 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit **and all of the following conditions are met:**

1. The household income of the customer is at or below 50 percent of the state median household income. A cooperative electric association utility may verify income on forms it provides or obtain verification of income from the local energy assistance provider. A customer is deemed to meet the income requirements of this clause if the customer receives any form of public assistance, including energy assistance that uses an income eligibility threshold set at or below 50 percent of the state median household income;

2. A customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household; and

3. A customer receives referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills. In addition, a cooperative electric association must, between August 15 and October 15 of each year, notify all residential customers of the provisions of this section.

Customers facing disconnection

Before disconnecting service to a residential customer between October 15 and April 15, an electric cooperative association must provide the following information to a customer:

1. A notice of the proposed disconnection;
2. A statement with the customer's rights and responsibilities;
3. A list of local energy assistance providers;
4. Forms on which to declare an inability to pay; and
5. A statement explaining available time-payment plans and other options to secure continued utility service.

Restrictions for disconnection

1. If a customer must be involuntarily disconnected between October 15 and April 15 for failure to comply with residential disconnection provisions, it must not occur on a Friday, unless the customer declines to enter into a payment agreement offered that day in person or via personal contact by telephone by a cooperative electric association;

2. Also, the disconnection must not occur on a weekend, holiday or the day before a holiday, when utility offices are closed, or after the close of a business on a day when disconnection is permitted, unless a field representative of a cooperative electric association who is authorized to enter into a payment agreement, accept payment and continue service offers a payment agreement to the customer; and

3. If a customer does not respond to a disconnection notice, the customer must not be disconnected until the utility investigates whether the residential unit is actually occupied. If the unit is found to be occupied, the utility must immediately inform the occupant of the provisions of this section. If the unit is unoccupied, the utility must give seven days written notice of the proposed disconnection to the local energy assistance provider before making a disconnection. If, prior to disconnection, a customer appeals a notice of involuntary disconnection, as provided by the utility's established appeal procedure, the utility must not disconnect until the appeal is resolved.

THE COLD WEATHER LAW PROVIDES YOU WITH THESE OPTIONS:

The RIGHT to request utility shutoff protection. If you do so and if your household income is less than 50 percent of the state median income, the service affecting your primary heat source cannot be disconnected for nonpayment of your bill. However, we have the right to accept or reject your request based on information supplied or other supporting documentation.

The RESPONSIBILITY, if you choose to request utility shutoff protection, you must complete a utility shutoff protection form and return it to us within 15 days of the notice to disconnect. You must contact us immediately to arrange a payment plan.

THE RIGHT to a mutually agreeable payment schedule with us. The schedule will cover your existing arrears, plus the estimated usage during the payment schedule period.

The RIGHT not to be involuntarily disconnected on a Friday or on a day before a holiday, or until at least 20 days after the postmark on the notice to disconnect or until 15 days after the notice and information has been personally delivered.

The RIGHT not to be disconnected until the utility investigates whether the residential unit is actually occupied when a customer does not respond to a disconnection notice. If the unit is found to be occupied, the utility must immediately inform the occupant of the provisions of this section. If the unit is unoccupied, the utility must give seven days' written notice of the proposed disconnection to the local energy assistance provider before making a disconnection.

The RIGHT to receive budget counseling from your local energy assistance provider or another organization of your choice.

The RIGHT to appeal the disconnection of service to the Federated Rural Electric Association Cooperative Board of Directors. If you choose to appeal, you must deliver or mail a personal letter stating your situation and issues in dispute. Your letter must be in our hands before the date of disconnection. You will be notified when the Board of Directors will review your appeal and you may be present at the review. No disconnection of service will take place

WHAT TO DO IF YOU MEET THE COLD WEATHER LAW CONDITIONS:

If you meet all the conditions of the Cold Weather Law as outlined in this brochure, can't pay your electric bill and need cold weather protection from utility shutoff, fill out the utility shutoff protection form on the back of this brochure and return it to Federated Rural Electric Association **immediately along with your income documentation**. The following is a list of energy assistance providers serving Federated Rural Electric Association:

Des Moines Valley Health and Human Services
(847-4000)

Jackson County Sheriff's Department (847-4420)

Martin County Human Services (238-4757)

Martin County Sheriff's Department (238-4481)

Minnesota Department of Energy Services; ask for fuel assistance (1-800-657-3805)

Minnesota Valley Action Council (238-1663)

United Community Action (507-847-2632)

WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON'T MEET THE COLD WEATHER LAW CONDITIONS:

If you do not meet all the conditions of the Cold Weather Law as outlined in this brochure, you do not qualify for winter shutoff protection. However, you still can continue to receive electric service if you call us to set up a mutually acceptable payment arrangement. Call Federated Rural Electric Association at 1-800-321-3520, 507-847-3520 or 728-8366 **BEFORE** the due date.

Read the notice of residential customer rights and possible assistance at right **BEFORE** completing this form.

UTILITY SHUTOFF PROTECTION

Fill out completely — (please print)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone: Home _____ Work _____

Account # (from your bill) _____

Total Amount Owing \$ _____

Total annual household income \$ _____

Source of income ("X" Appropriate Boxes):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> MFIP/GA/Food |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment/Worker's Compensation | <input type="checkbox"/> Stamps/MSA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Support | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not pay for my own medical expenses. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Security/SSI and/or Disability/Pensions | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Assistance/GA | |
| Medical Care/MN Care | |

No. of persons in household (Include yourself) _____

Please check if any of the following exists in your home:

- Medical emergency
- Disabled person in home
- I have already been approved for fuel assistance or emergency assistance from a local energy assistance agency based on my income.

By signing this form, I hereby authorize any gas or electric utility that serves us to exchange billing information. I also authorize any energy assistance providers or human service agencies to exchange any income information to help determine income eligibility. I acknowledge that I have received, read and understand the enclosed Notice of Residential Customers Rights and Possible Assistance. I attest that the above information is true and correct.

Signature _____ Date _____

Income documentation must be included with this form per the notice instructions.