



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

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Governor

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JACQUELYN A. SUÁREZ
Commissioner

October 10, 2024

Dear Vendor:

Please be advised that on August 7, 2023, the regulations for the Winter Termination Program (WTP) (N.J.A.C. 5:45) were adopted.

The Winter Termination Program prevents service discontinuation for eligible residential customers receiving residential electric, sewer and water service from a vendor (local authority, municipal utility, or rural electric cooperative) from November 15th through March 15th. Service cannot be disconnected during this period to those residential customers who demonstrate at the time of the intended termination that they are:

1. Recipients of benefits under the Federal Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) or certified as eligible therefore protected under standards set by the New Jersey Department of Human Services.
2. Recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF).
3. Recipients of Federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
4. Recipients of Pharmaceutical Assistance to the Aged and Disabled (PAAD).
5. Recipients of General Assistance (GA) benefits.
6. Recipients of the Universal Service Fund (USF).
7. Recipients of benefits under the Lifeline Credit Program.
8. Persons unable to pay their utility bills because of circumstances beyond their control. Such circumstances shall include, but shall not be limited to, unemployment, illness, medical related expenses, recent death of an immediate family member, or any other circumstances that might cause financial hardship.
9. A participant in any other State or local program that provides assistance, specifically, to help eligible customers pay electric, sewer, or water bills.

Please be advised that residential customers can either submit the program's Self-Certification form or verbally notify their utility company of their eligibility to receive protection under the Winter Termination Program. All customers in arrears should be referred to DCAid or NJ211 for possible assistance.

The regulations require all vendors to do the following:

1. Send a notice to all residential customers about the Winter Termination Program in the billing cycle prior to November 15th. The notice shall set forth the terms and conditions of the Program. A vendor shall also send a notice about the Program to a residential customer who has started a new service, after the billing cycle, prior to November 15th at the time the residential customer starts the new service. The notice must also include information about all available bill-payment assistance programs.

- a. If a vendor has a policy that prohibits service from being shut off to any residential customer from November 15th to March 15th, the vendor does not have to comply with the notice requirement above.
2. Post a notice describing the Program on its website. This notice should include the following:
 - a. A summary of the program including eligibility requirements.
 - b. A phone number, email address and mailing address for residential customers to use to communicate their eligibility.
 - c. A statement that protection under the Winter Termination Program can be obtained by verbally advising a utility company of their eligibility or by submitting a Self-Certification form to the utility company.
 - d. A link to DCA's Winter Termination Program website:
<https://www.nj.gov/dca/dhcr/offices/wintertermination.shtml> and the self-certification form:
<https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/forms/docs/Self Cert for WTP.pdf>
3. Not request a security deposit or an addition to an existing security deposit from a customer who is eligible for, and seeks the protection of, the Winter Termination Program.
4. Restore service during the Winter Termination Program period if a residential customer applies for utility bill payment assistance, as provided by N.J.S.A. 40A:5A-29.b(3).

The regulations require that all residential electric, water, and wastewater customers who are eligible for, and seek the protection of the Winter Termination Program, do the following:

1. Make good-faith payments during the period if they are able. The bills remaining unpaid during the Winter Termination Program period will still be owed and may lead to disconnection after the WTP period.
2. Forward any electric, water, or wastewater-related financial assistance received to their appropriate electric, water, or wastewater vendor.

Attached are copies of the Winter Termination Program Flyer and the Self-Certification Form. Both documents are available on the Department's website at:

<https://www.nj.gov/dca/dhcr/offices/wintertermination.shtml>. Also attached is a sample bill insert.

If you have any questions about this program, please contact Fidel Ekhelar at fidel.ekhelar@dca.nj.gov.

Sincerely



Jacquelyn A. Suárez
Commissioner

Attachments