



COLD WEATHER RULE

The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule is designated to assist people who have trouble paying their utility bills during the winter months. The Rule was issued by the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (216B.097 as amended by Minnesota Laws 2001, Chapter 212, Article 4, Sec. 2). The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule applies from October 15 to April 15.

The Cold Weather Rule provides that your utility (the City) cannot disconnect your residential utility service during the winter months if the customer meets all of the following requirements:

- 1) Utility disconnection would affect the customer's primary heat source;
- 2) The Customer has declared an inability to pay on forms provided by the City;
- 3) The household income of the customer is less than 50 percent of the State Median Income (please refer to the chart below);
- 4) The Customer's account is current for the billing period immediately prior to October 15, or the customer has entered into a payment schedule and is reasonably current with payments under the schedule;
- 5) The Customer receives referrals to energy assistance programs, weatherization conservation, or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills.

To qualify for Cold Weather Rule protection, you must meet both of the following conditions:

- 1) Disconnection would affect your primary heat source.
- 2) You qualify for:
 - a. Inability to Pay Plan, or
 - b. Ten Percent Plan
 - c. Reconnection Plan

The Cold Weather Rule does not prohibit winter shut off. If you receive a disconnection notice, act promptly. Please contact the City of Arlington at 507-964-2378.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM INCOME ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

50 percent of State Median Annual Gross Income Levels

Household Size	Maximum Income
1	\$22,620
2	\$29,580
3	\$36,540
4	\$43,500
5	\$50,460
6	\$57,420
7	\$58,725

8	\$60,030
9	\$61,335
10	\$62,640

COLD WEATHER RULE PAYMENT OPTIONS

If you receive a notice of disconnection, the following options are available:

Inability to Pay Plan

To qualify for the Inability to Pay Plan, you must be a residential customer who:

- 1) Was current or reasonably on time with a payment plan as of October 15; and
- 2) Meets Income Guidelines as set by the State; and
- 3) Is willing to make payment arrangements

If you qualify for Inability to Pay, the City of Arlington cannot disconnect your utility service between October 15 and April 15.

Ten Percent Plan

To qualify for the Ten Percent Plan you must be a residential customer who:

- 1) Was not current or reasonably on time with a payment plan as of October 15; and
- 2) Meets income guidelines set by the State; and
- 3) Agrees to pay the lesser of ten percent of monthly household income or the full amount of the current bill, not include arrears.

If you qualify for the Ten Percent Plan and you make your required monthly payments, the City of Arlington cannot disconnect your utility service between October 15 and April 15.

If you receive service from more than one utility, payment will be divided among the utilities. The utility providing the major portion of your energy costs from October 15 to April 15 will receive 70 percent of the 10 percent amount. All other utilities will receive equal portions of the remaining 30 percent.

Reconnection Plan

If the City of Arlington has shut off your utility service on or before October 15, you may qualify for the Reconnection Plan. To qualify, you must be a residential customer who:

- 1) Was not current or reasonably on time with a payment plan as of October 15; and
- 2) Meets income guidelines set by the State; and
- 3) Agrees to pay the total amount owed plus the current utility bill in monthly payments. You are not required to pay more than ten percent of your monthly household income.

If you qualify for the Reconnection Plan, your utility service will be restored. If you continue to pay, we cannot disconnect your service between October 15 and April 15.

Payment Schedule Plan

The City of Arlington offers a payment schedule to residential customers of all income levels who:

- 1) Was current or reasonably on time with a payment plan as of October 15; and
- 2) Is willing to make payment arrangements

If you continue to make your payment arrangements on time, we will not disconnect your service. Failure to keep payment arrangements, will result in an immediate disconnect. Under this plan, a customer may change its initial payment schedule with approval of the City of Arlington.

THIRD PARTY NOTIFICATION

Third Party Notification applies to all customers. This program benefits those who live alone, persons with disabilities, senior citizens, customers who do not read English, as well as renter/landlord situations.

The purpose of the program is to notify a third party, along with the customer, that a disconnection notice has been sent. A third party could be a friend, relative, church or community agency. Although the third party is notified of the proposed disconnection, they are not required to pay the bill(s). The third party is able to receive and give information about the personal circumstances of the customer and make a payment plan with the City of Arlington for the customer. This helps avoid the hardship that would result from service being disconnected. To name a third party, please complete a Third Party Notification form.

RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Utility Customers have rights and responsibilities under the Cold Weather Rule. These rights and responsibilities are designed to help you with winter utility bills. You must act **PROMPTLY!** If you choose not to assert your rights or choose not to enter into a mutually acceptable payment schedule, your service will be disconnected. Specifically, the Cold Weather Rule provides you with these options:

As a Utility Customer, you have the **RIGHT** to declare your inability to pay your utility bill. If you declare an “Inability to Pay”, you must enter into a payment schedule with the City to maintain your utility service. You have the **RIGHT** to appeal any proposed disconnection by the City. You will have to provide the City with proof that you are unable to pay and were current in payments to the City on October 15. Your service will not be disconnected until the appeal is resolved. Appeals are resolved by the City Council.

As a Utility Customer, you have the **RESPONSIBILITY**, if you prove an inability to pay, to complete an “inability to pay” form with the City. If you are receiving Energy Assistance or any form of public assistance, and can document that for us, you do not have to fill out an “inability to pay” form. However, you must still arrange a payment plan with the City.

As a Utility Customer, you also have the **RIGHT**, to a mutually acceptable payment schedule with the City.

But Utility Customers also have the **RESPONSIBILITY** of making payments as agreed to, or promptly notify the City on why you cannot keep the agreement. You may then request a new payment schedule that is subject to City approval.

Utility Customers have the **RIGHT** to request that the City notify a third party if your service becomes subject to disconnection.

Utility Customers also have the **RESPONSIBILITY** to receive budget counseling from a local energy assistance provider or other financial counseling organization.

NEED HELP PAYING?

If you are having trouble paying your utility bill, local agencies may be able to provide payment assistance. The City of Arlington recommends you call one of the following:

Minnesota Valley Action Council, Sibley County Office 507-237-2981

Sibley County Human Services 507-237-4000

Heat Share (Salvation Army) 888-999-1568

SAVE ENERGY – SAVE MONEY

Here are some ways you can conserve energy at no cost or minimal cost.

- Manage your thermostat. Try these settings:
 - Heating: 66° - 68°
 - Cooling: 76° - 78°
- Install a programmable thermostat. Set back the temperature 10 degrees for eight hours every night during the winter months and you'll lower your heating bills by 10 percent.
- Turn off lights when not in use.
- Check the furnace filter. Change it monthly.
- Check the duct work for dirt streaks, especially near seams. These indicate air leaks and they should be sealed with duct mastic.
- Insulate any ducts or pipes that travel through unheated spaces.
- Have your furnace cleaned and maintained annually by a professional.
- Seal any air leaks. Caulk and weather strip any cracks around doors and window frames. Block opening at bottom of doorways.
- Vacuum refrigerator/freezer coils to improve the efficiency of the unit(s).
- Add foam gaskets behind outlet covers and switch plates. Use safety plugs in unused outlets.
- Lower the thermostat on your water heater; a setting of 120° F provides comfortable hot water for most uses.
- Insulate your hot-water storage tank, following the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Insulate the first six feet of the hot and cold water pipes connected to the water heater.

NEED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

Contact the City of Arlington at:
204 Shamrock Drive
Arlington, MN 55307
(507) 964-2378
www.arlingtonmn.com