



# Public Service Commission

SERVING MARYLAND SINCE 1910

Frequently Asked Questions

[Home](#) \ [Frequently Asked Questions](#) \ [Complaints](#)

## **Need Help with Paying your Bill or Have a Termination Notice**

### **1. Where can I obtain help with paying my heating and electric bills?**

The Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) is available to help consumers who need help with paying their winter heating and/or yearly electric bills. Consumers may apply for the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) for help with their heating bill (gas, electric or oil). Payments are made directly to your fuel provider or utility company one time per year. In addition, consumers may apply for the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP). This program provides assistance dollars that are applied to reduce future electric bills. The consumer is required to participate in budget billing to receive this grant. The grant is available once per program year. In addition, consumers may be eligible for help with past due electric bills provided they had not received arrearage retirement within the past seven years. To obtain more information, including the income eligibility requirements, contact [OHEP](#).

In addition, consumers may contact the [Fuel Fund of Maryland](#). The Fuel Fund pays a portion of an eligible customer's outstanding bill and you are responsible for paying the rest. You must have received all other government and program help first before contacting Fuel Fund. Households can receive help from Fuel Fund once every 12 months.

### **2. I received a termination notice, what should I do??**

If you receive a termination notice, you must contact your [utility](#) to request an extension and/or a payment arrangement. Often if you contact the utility before the notice expires, the utility will try to work with you as long as you are able to make a reasonable offer to pay what you owe. You should also immediately apply for assistance from [OHEP](#) and [Fuel Fund of Maryland](#).

**3. Can the utility terminate my service if I have someone in the household that has a serious medical condition?**

The utility must refrain from terminating service for an additional 30 days upon notice from the customer that a customer or occupant has a serious medical condition. Upon receipt of the termination notice, if you or an occupant in the household has a serious illness and/or is in need of life support equipment, it is your responsibility to notify the utility **before** the termination notice expires, and **before** the service is terminated. The utility will require that your doctor complete a Commission approved form to certify a serious illness or the need for life support equipment. A physician or the customer may initially telephone the utility of the intent to obtain certification. However, the required certificate is to be forwarded to the utility not later than the day before the scheduled date for termination of service. Upon notification, the utility will withhold termination for an additional 30 days. During that time, you are required to promptly enter into an agreement with the utility for the payment of the unpaid bills and current amounts due for service. It is important to note that the utility is authorized to pursue collection procedures (that include disconnecting your service) if you fail to adhere to the payment plan.

**4. Is the Utility required to give me notice before turning off my service?**

The utility is required to send a notice of termination to the customer at least **14 days** before the date on or after which termination will occur if the termination is due to nonpayment of a bill. The utility is required to give you **7 days** notice if they are terminating service because they discovered that the customer's service was secured in a fictitious manner or in the name of a third party without disclosing that upfront or if the applicant/customer had misrepresented a material fact or obtained service for the purpose of assisting another customer from not paying their outstanding bill. If the utility is terminating service for a hazardous condition or tampering or unauthorized use of the service, then they do not have to provide any advance notice to the customer before terminating service.

**5. My gas and/or electric service has been turned off – what should I do?**

If your gas and/or electric service has been turned off, the first thing you should do is contact the [utility](#) to find out what they are requiring as payment to have them restore your service. The utility by law can require that you pay the entire past due bill, a reconnection fee, and part of a deposit as a condition to restore your service.

If you are unable to pay the amount the utility is requiring that you pay, you should seek assistance from the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) first. If you qualify for assistance, your Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) grant can be used to help pay off all or part of your arrearage. In addition, you should apply for the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP). This program provides assistance dollars that are applied to reduce future electric bills. You are required to participate in budget billing to receive this grant. In addition, you may

be eligible for help with past due electric bills provided you had not received the EUSP arrearage retirement within the past seven years. Finally, you should apply for the Utility Service Protection Program (USPP). As a USPP participant, you can have your service reconnected between November 1 and March 31 without paying a reconnection fee and deposit. To obtain more information about these programs, including the income eligibility requirements, contact [OHEP](#).

After you applied for these grants and if you still do not have enough to get the service reconnected, you should contact the [Fuel Fund of Maryland](#). The Fuel Fund pays a portion of an eligible customer's outstanding bill and you are responsible for paying the rest. You must have received all other government and program help first before contacting Fuel Fund. Households can receive help from Fuel Fund once every 12 months.

Additional [referral information](#) is provided.

#### **6. Who do I contact if I need more information or I need to file a complaint**

Complaints need to be filed in writing and can be done so from the Public Service Commission's website, by clicking on COMPLAINTS. If your service is OFF, our office cannot require that the utility restore service pending disposition of a dispute. If the service is ON, you will be required to continue to make payment on the undisputed portion of the bill while your dispute is pending with our office.

If you need more information, Consumer Affairs Division (CAD) staff is available to take your call Monday through Friday, except holidays, between 9 a.m.-Noon and 1-4 p.m. To reach CAD call toll-free at 1-800-492-0474, option #3 or (410) 767-8028, press #1 for Spanish or #2 for English.

[Back to FAQ Topics](#)