

Customer Information Regarding Utility Service During the COVID-19 Health Emergency

April 16, 2020

Illinois Commerce Commission Staff

Illinois Commerce Commission (Commission or ICC)

- The Illinois Commerce Commission, or ICC, was created by the Illinois General Assembly in 1921 to administer the Public Utilities Act, as well as related utility and transportation laws.
- The ICC is a quasi-judicial body made up of 5 Commissioners and is supported by Staff who provide technical and legal expertise.
- The ICC's mission is to balance the interests of consumers and public utilities to ensure adequate, efficient, reliable, safe, and least-cost utility services, while promoting the development of an effectively competitive energy supplier market.
- In addition, the ICC ensures public safety and administers consumer protection programs with regard to intrastate commercial motor carriers of general freight, household goods movers, relocation towers, safety towers, personal property warehouses, repossession agencies and personnel, and general safety of railroad tracks, facilities and equipment in the State.

Disaster Proclamations and Stay at Home Executive Order

- On March 9, 2020, JB Pritzker, Governor of the State of Illinois, in response to the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation, declared all counties in the State of Illinois as a disaster area through April 7, 2020.
- On April 1, 2020, Governor Pritzker issues a second disaster proclamation declaring all counties in the State of Illinois as a disaster area through April 30, 2020.
- On March 20, 2020, Governor Pritzker issued an Executive Order that included, among other provisions, Stay at Home, Social Distancing, and Essential Business and Operations orders. This order currently extends through April 30, 2020.

Stay at Home Executive Order

- This Executive Order states that individuals may leave their residence to provide any services or perform any work necessary to offer, provision, operate, maintain and repair Essential Infrastructure.
- The Executive Order includes among essential Infrastructure:
 - operation and maintenance of utilities, including water, sewer, and gas; electrical (including power generation, distribution, and production of raw materials);
 - internet, video, and telecommunications systems (including the provision of essential global, national, and local infrastructure for computing services, business infrastructure, communications, and web-based services).
- Frequently Asked Questions and other information regarding essential infrastructure designations can be found on the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunities website at: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/Pages/default.aspx>

Utility Worker Interaction

- Utilities are generally limiting field work that requires customer interaction and/or entrance to customer premises to emergency and/or essential work. At the same time utility workers are working to keep the lights on, heating and cooling working, and water flowing.
- For the protection of both the public and utility workers, the Commission asks consumers to minimize contact with utility workers who are working in their neighborhoods. We urge everyone to observe the social distancing protocols recommended by the CDC when interaction is necessary.
- A request to locate underground utility lines can be made by dialing the convenient three-digit phone number “811” or making a request online. Despite the ‘Shelter in Place’ order, both JULIE and 811 Chicago are continuing to operate 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. However, wait times could be extended due to staff across the state being impacted by COVID-19.
- Again, for the safety and health of the public and utility workers, the ICC is urging homeowners and professional excavators to consider postponing projects if they are non-essential.

Commission and Commission Staff Actions

- On March 13, 2020, Governor Pritzker sent a letter to Commission Chairman Carrie Zalewski with a request from the Governor and Attorney General Kwame Raoul calling on the Commission to initiate emergency proceedings on a moratorium on shutoffs and more flexible credit and collections procedures in response to the ongoing Coronavirus (COVID-19) situation.
- On March 13, 2020, the Acting Executive Director of the Commission issued a letter requesting public utilities in Illinois take immediate steps to cease disconnections for non-payment and to suspend the imposition of late payment fees or penalties.
- On March 18, 2020, the Commission voted unanimously to formalize Governor Pritzker and the ICC's request of Illinois electric, natural gas, water and wastewater utilities to cease disconnections and the threat of disconnections during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency.

Commission Docket No. 20-0309

- Pursuant to the Commission's March 18, 2020 Order, public utilities including electric, natural gas, water and sewer utilities will not disconnect customers for non-payment or impose late payment charges on customers through and including May 1, 2020, or until the Governor announces the end of the COVID-19 state of emergency, if the state of emergency continues past May 1, 2020
- Disconnections required to maintain safe utility operations, or that are necessary for the repair or maintenance of utility facilities, are not the subject of this order and may continue as individual utilities deem necessary.
- The Commission also required each Illinois gas, electric distribution, water, and sewer utility to design and implement on a temporary basis more flexible credit and collections procedures and file them for Commission consideration and approval to ensure that customers remain connected to essential utility services when the emergency status ends.

Schedule in Commission Docket No. 20-0309

- Because the Commission has not yet ruled on the flexible credit and collections issues and they remain open before the Commission, I will not address them here.
- The current case schedule calls for the Administrative Law Judge overseeing the case to issue a proposed order April 20, 2020 and for the Commission to issue a final order on April 28, 2020. Case information can be found at <https://www.icc.illinois.gov/docket/P2020-0309>.
- Instructions for making a public comment on the case can be found at <https://www.icc.illinois.gov/consumer/CommentOnACase.aspx>. Those interested in commenting may also contact the Illinois Commerce Commission using the toll-free number at 800-524-0795. A Counselor will be happy to take your comment on the case.

Additional Actions Regarding Disconnections and Late Payment Fees and Penalties

- The Commission's Order in Docket No. 20-0309 does not apply to municipal utilities, cooperatives, or telecommunications companies.
- While the Commission has little or no authority under Illinois law to prohibit disconnections and assessments of late payment fees or penalties by municipal utilities, cooperatives, or telecommunications companies, on March 13, 2020, the Acting Executive Director of the Commission issued letters to municipal utilities, cooperatives, and telecommunications companies requesting, but not mandating, these entities to take immediate steps to cease disconnections for non-payment and to suspend the imposition of late payment fees or penalties.

Restrictions on In-Person Marketing

- On March 18, 2020, the Commission issued two additional orders in response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) public health emergency.
 - In Docket No. 20-0310 the Commission issued an Emergency Order placing an immediate moratorium on in-person or door-to-door marketing of services by Alternative Retail Electric Suppliers (ARES)
 - In Docket No. 20-0311 the Commission issued an Emergency Order placing an immediate moratorium on in-person or door-to-door marketing of services Alternative Gas Suppliers (AGS)
- Up to date information on how the Illinois Commerce Commission is handling the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) can be found at <https://www.icc.illinois.gov/home/covid-19>

Existing Credit and Collections Rules

Part 280

- Focus upon Residential and especially Low Income Consumers
- Fair and consistent standards for applications for service
- No “household rule” for debts
- Clear billing content
- Deferred Payment Arrangements; reinstatements; renegotiations
- Medical Certification; 60 day stay of disconnection; new arrangements
- Timely reconnection
- Temperature and Winter months protections
- Winter Reconnection terms for heating related services

Low Income Residential Customers

- Qualification under LIHEAP and PIPP
 - Waiver of most deposit requirements
 - Waiver of all late fees
 - Additional Deferred Payment Arrangements
 - Moratorium on disconnections during winter months
 - Early eligibility for winter reconnection and more favorable terms
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- ❖ Prohibition on retail supplier enrollments of Low-Income customers under HEAT Act



Contact the ICC's Consumer Services Division (CSD)

1-800-524-0795

Monday through Friday 8:30-5:00

Online:

www.icc.illinois.gov/complaints/public-utility



FIND SERVICES

**Coronavirus Updates &
Information**

April 16, 2020



HAROLD RICE, JR.

President & Chief Executive Officer, CEDA

Harold Rice, Jr. joined CEDA in 2014, bringing more than 35 years of organizational leadership in both the non-profit and corporate sectors. His responsibilities involve developing long-term strategy, executing operating plans and managing government relationships.

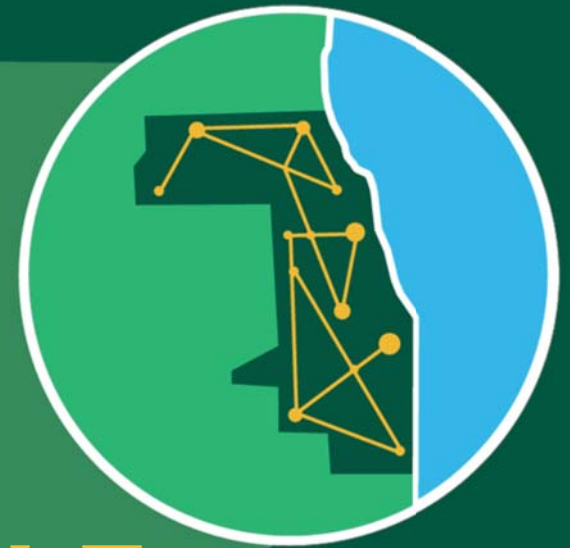
Prior to joining CEDA, Mr. Rice was the Executive Director and CEO of Albany Park Community Center and Chief Development Officer for United Way of Metropolitan Chicago. He is an active Board member of Illinois Association of Community Action Agencies, as well as, Cook County Social Innovation Commission.

Mr. Rice earned an Associate of Arts Degree in Engineering Technology from Kennedy-King College and a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the University of Minnesota. He also holds a Master of Science Degree from Cardinal Stritch University.



**WE BELIEVE NO ONE
SHOULD LIVE IN POVERTY**

WE EMPOWER PEOPLE
and communities to be
strong, healthy and thriving





**Home
Weatherization**



**Energy
Assistance**



Housing Services



**Family Support and
Community Engagement**



**Women, Infants,
and Children**

FIND SERVICES

Family Support and Community Engagement (FsACE)

Coronavirus Emergency Response

- Financial Assistance: Water & Telephone Bill Payments, Childcare for Essential Workers and Basic Essentials Assistance
- Health and Nutrition: Medical Supplies, Prescriptions Costs and Emotional Counseling Services

Additional Services

- Dental and Vision Assistance
- Transportation
- Family Support
- Employment Counseling, Trades Skills Training and Scholarships

FIND SERVICES

Energy Assistance

- Current PIPP participants will receive their monthly benefit. Director Vendor Payments (DVP) application status can be checked on our website.

Home Weatherization

- Contact wxcustomerservice@cedaorg.net for more details on when in-home services will resume

REMOTE Applications will begin the week of April 20th!

Visit our website for more details:

www.CEDAorg.net

And TEXT 313131 to CEDA for announcements

FIND SERVICES

WIC

- Services are modified to reduce traffic and maintain safe social distancing
- Call or email our clinic to arrange your benefits

Housing Services

- If you are experiencing challenging paying your mortgage, call us to explore your options. Our Housing Counselors are here to assist with foreclosure prevention, pre and post-purchase counseling and financial counseling.
- Call 312-288-8010 or email Housing@CEDAorg.net



GET INVOLVED & STAY INFORMED

Follow us on Social Media
Sign-Up for our eNewsletter

BE COUNTED in the Census 2020



THANK YOU

www.CEDAorg.net



Telecom, Internet & Energy Sales Concerns



Aimee Gendusa-English
Lead Service Liaison
Citizens Utility Board
April 16, 2020

CUB?



- Citizens Utility Board (CUB)
- Consumer watchdog group
- 1983 CUB Act
- Challenge utility rate hikes
- Fight for consumer protection laws
- Educational seminars
- Consumer complaint hotline: **1 (800) 669 - 5556**



Federal Communications Commission (FCC)



- Asked phone and internet companies to:
 - Not terminate residential or small business service
 - Waive residential and small business late fees
 - Open their Wi-Fi hotspots to public
 - 700+ have pledged
 - Policies vary by company
 - Lifeline telephone assistance re-certification postponed till May 16th
 - <https://www.fcc.gov/keep-americans-connected>
-

AT&T Response



Through May 13:

- No terminations of service
 - Unlimited data for home internet (wireline and fixed wireless)
 - Hotspots open to everyone
 - Late payment fees waived for wireless, home phone, broadband, U-verse TV, DIRECTV
 - Overage charges waived for domestic wireless data, voice or text
 - Waivers must be requested and credits take 1-2 bill cycles
 - Mobile hotspot data increased +15GB/month /line
 - Free express shipping, activation, upgrades and restocking on devices purchased online
 - <https://about.att.com/pages/COVID-19.html>
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AT&T Access



- Low-income internet program
 - \$5 or \$10 /month
 - Households at or below 135% of federal poverty level
 - 2 free months for customers who apply by April 30
 - Expanded to all Head Start & National School Lunch Program households
 - Waiving all home internet data overage fees
 - <https://www.att.com/shop/internet/access/#!/>
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Comcast Response



Through May 13:

- No terminations of service
 - Unlimited internet data at no additional charge
 - Hotspots open to everyone
 - Xfinity TV, Internet, Home or home phone service customers can postpone a bill through <https://my.xfinity.com/> , follow menus to “choose new payment date”
 - Late payment fees suspended as of March 13th
 - Credits will appear on following bill
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Comcast Internet Essentials



- Low-Income internet program
 - \$9.95/month
 - National School Lunch Program, Housing Assistance, Medicaid, SNAP, or SSI households
 - 2 free months for new applicants
 - Speed increased from 15/2 Mbps to 25/3
 - Call 1-855-846-8376 (1-855-765-6995 Spanish)
 - <https://internetessentials.com/>
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Energy Suppliers



- Usually make your bill go UP
- Can “eat up” LIHEAP grants
- Slamming, teaser rates, lawsuits, investigations
- TPV recording required
- 30 days from first bill to cancel
- No solicitation inside buildings
- No more exit fees!
- Cannot switch LIHEAP accounts!



NO IN PERSON SALES DURING COVID 19

CUB Utility Bill Checkups



- Normally: hundreds of events around the state
- Now: email bills to ubc@citizensutilityboard.org
- Individual bill review:
- *energy suppliers*
- *energy consumption*
- *energy saving programs*
- *financial aid referrals*
- *advocacy / complaints*



Thank you!

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