



COVID Protections for Small Utility Customers

FACT SHEET

October 2020

The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) has passed consumer protections to help residential customers of smaller utilities in the state who are struggling to pay their bills amid the COVID-19 crisis. The order—issued in June after negotiations among consumer advocates and utility companies—builds on protections that were put in place at the request of Gov. J.B. Pritzker and Attorney General Kwame Raoul in March. If you have questions about these protections, *please contact your utility*.

Which utilities are included in this plan?

The small utilities plan only applies to these Illinois' companies: MidAmerican, Mount Carmel, Liberty Gas, Consumers Gas, and Illinois Gas.

- MidAmerican - 1-888-427-5632
- Mount Carmel - 1-618-262-5151
- Liberty Gas - 1-855-644-8134
- Consumers Gas - 1-618-382-4158
- Illinois Gas - 1-866-705-7291

The ICC approved another protection plan for customers of larger utilities, like Ameren and ComEd. [Click here to see CUB's fact sheet for those protections.](#)

What protections are included in the plan?

The protections for residential customers include consumer-friendly payment plans, a waive of reconnection fees, and for some utilities, financial assistance. There was a moratorium on disconnections and late payment fees, but the moratorium period for most consumers ended **June 26**, with these two exceptions:

- Liberty Utilities extended its moratorium on disconnections through March 31, 2021 for ALL customers.
- MidAmerican extended its moratorium on disconnections for Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) qualified residential customers through March 31, 2021.

Consumer-friendly Payment Plans:

- For six months after the moratorium ends (about the end of December), utilities are required to offer longer Deferred Payment Arrangements (DPAs)—payment plans that help customers pay off debt with the company.
- For six months following the end of the moratorium (about the end of December), down payments for these plans will be capped at 10 percent of the DPA, but the utility may waive the payment.
- Please Note: These arrangements will only be available for the first six months after the moratorium ends (about the end of December), so take advantage of them now and try your best to remain on them. If a customer defaults, they can reestablish a DPA under the same terms just once after the first default, until Aug. 1, 2021.

Reconnections:

- Reconnection fees waived for six months after the end of the moratorium (about the end of December) for LIHEAP-eligible consumers and those who express financial hardship.

Can I receive any financial assistance?

The relief plan includes a Bill Payment Assistance Program for MidAmerican electric and gas customers, which offers debt forgiveness for eligible utility customers facing financial struggles. **Funding is limited, and assistance for each customer is limited to \$500.** To apply, contact MidAmerican.

Are there any other key provisions?

For six months after the moratorium ends (roughly the end of December), utilities will not report late payments and nonpayment for active customers to credit bureaus and reporting agencies. Note: Some utilities may have already exercised this practice before the COVID protections were in place.