



# COVID Protections for Small Utility Customers

## FACT SHEET

December 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, waiver 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 **July 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 and Liberty Gas customers, which offers debt forgiveness for eligible utility customers. Funding is limited. Each utility's program will be slightly different in terms of the total amount of available funding for the program and the amount allotted to each customer. To apply, contact your utility. To see the maximum assistance amount you could receive, consult the chart below.

Utility	Assistance Cap
MidAmerican (electric and gas)	\$500 per customer
Liberty Utilities	\$250 per customer