

Important information about recent changes to billing rules

On Nov. 21, 2017, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) approved changes in rules governing billing practices and consumer standards. Below, you will find more information about these changes and how they may apply to you. View complete billing rules at www.michigan.gov/mpsc.

Key changes:

- New requirements are in effect for critical-care customer shut-off protection. See below for specific language.
- New general deposit conditions have been added for nonresidential customers. See below for specific language.
- We will submit an extreme weather condition policy to the MPSC that provides the criteria or factors we follow in suspending service disconnection to residential customers during extreme cold weather.
- We will file a customer data privacy tariff outlining the protections we take to ensure the privacy of your information and data.
- You will receive written notification of any balance transfer.
- Back-billing or refund due to inaccuracy of meters is limited to the 12-month period immediately preceding discovery of the error.
- The interest rate is reduced from 7 percent to 5 percent and applies to deposits, billing errors, meter errors and unauthorized use.
- We will notify you on your bill if your manually read meter is estimated due to access or safety concerns.
- You can add a second adult to your account with proper documentation.

New rules:

R 460.130a Critical-care customer shut-off protection

Rule 30a. (1) A utility shall restore or refrain from shutting off utility service to a critical-care customer due to an inability to pay a utility bill when an interruption of service would be immediately life-threatening.

(2) On an annual basis, a critical-care customer shall provide the utility with an updated commission-approved medical certification

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form certifying his or her continued status as a critical-care customer. If the customer's status as a critical-care customer ends, a customer or occupant of the household shall notify the utility of the change in status.

(3) A utility shall provide a critical-care customer with a grace period of three business days, during which it shall postpone the shut off of utility service to the critical-care customer to allow the customer time to obtain a completed commission-approved medical certification form.

(4) Upon request, a utility shall provide and make available on its website a commission-approved medical certification form for use in obtaining a physician's or medical facility's certification demonstrating the customer's status as a critical-care customer. Upon receipt of the medical certification form, the utility shall notify the customer that it has received the form.

(5) A utility shall maintain a special file on critical-care customers and an appropriate identification of such customers for the purpose of ensuring that utility service is provided for as long as the customer remains a critical-care customer and the customer's inability to pay continues.

(6) When a utility has notice of a critical-care customer for whom a planned service interruption would be immediately life-threatening, the utility shall notify the customer of the planned service interruption and shall not shut off service using remote shut-off capability without first initiating person-to-person contact with the customer.

(7) Nothing in this rule relieves the customer of his or her obligation to pay for utility service. A utility may require that the customer enter into a reasonable payment plan.

(8) Nothing in this rule shall prohibit a utility that observes an unsafe connection at a customer's location caused by unauthorized use of electric or natural gas service from implementing measures to cure or address the unsafe connection, pursuant to section 9d(1) of 1939 PA 3, MCL 460.9d(1).

R 460.111a General deposit conditions for nonresidential customers.

Rule 11a. (1) A utility may require a deposit from a customer or applicant as a condition of receiving or continuing nonresidential service if one of the following conditions applies:

(a) The customer or applicant has an unfavorable credit rating with a credit reporting agency.

(b) The customer or applicant has an unpaid delinquent bill for natural gas or electric service.

(c) The customer or applicant has engaged in unauthorized use of utility service within the last six years.

(d) Two or more shut-off notices have been issued within the most recent 12-month period.

(e) Service has been discontinued for nonpayment.

(f) An unsatisfactory record of bill payment within the first six months after service commenced exists.

Rule 11a. (3) During the heating season, a small nonresidential customer shall not pay a deposit unless that customer has been shut off for nonpayment during the prior 12 months.

