



Cold Weather Rule – Notice of Customer Rights and Responsibilities

Read this page carefully to be sure you understand your rights and responsibilities under the Cold Weather Rule. If you have questions or would like more information, contact Northwest Gas at 507-524-4103 or 800-367-6964. **If you receive a disconnection notice, you must act immediately.**

About the Minnesota Cold Weather Rule

The State of Minnesota set up the Cold Weather Rule to help customers who cannot pay their gas bill in full. It does not completely stop winter disconnections but provides customers extra protection from October 1 through April 30. The rule defines:

- What you can do if you receive a Notice of Proposed Disconnect
- What you can do if you have been disconnected and want reconnection of gas service

If you receive a Notice of Proposed Disconnect, Northwest Gas also will send you the following materials to help you manage your gas bill:

1. Information about your rights and responsibilities
2. Information about how to reduce energy use
3. A list of agencies that help pay fuel bills and a list of weatherization providers.

What to do if you receive a Notice of Proposed Disconnect or if your service has been disconnected

In order to avoid disconnection or to have service reconnected, you must either pay your bill in full or call Northwest Gas and enter into a Payment Plan. You must keep the Payment Plan during the Cold Weather Rule months in order to continue to receive protection from disconnection.

Payment Plan. You have the right to make a Payment Plan during the Cold Weather Rule months. To set up a Payment Plan, call Northwest Gas at **507-524-4103 or 800-367-6964**— no written application is required. If you and Northwest Gas agree on a Payment Plan, and you continue to make your payments, your natural gas service will not be shut off.

The Payment Plan will consider your financial circumstances, and any extenuating circumstances, and must be acceptable to you and Northwest Gas. It will cover what you owe plus the amount you will be billed during the period of the Payment Plan. Most payment plans under the Cold Weather Rule last until April 30 unless you agree on a different period. If you and Northwest Gas are unable to agree on a Payment Plan, you have a right to appeal.

Northwest Gas also can refer you to agencies that may be able to help you pay your fuel bills.

If you receive Energy Assistance, you are automatically eligible for protection under the Cold Weather Rule.

This will qualify you for special payment terms. Under these terms, Northwest Gas will not require that you pay more than 10 percent of your monthly household income for your natural gas bill. If you meet income guidelines set by the state government, but do not receive Energy Assistance, these special payment terms are also available to you when you provide proof of income.

If you find you are not able to make the payments as agreed upon, call Northwest Gas to request a change. If you and Northwest Gas are unable to agree on a Payment Plan, you have a right to appeal.

How do I apply for Cold Weather Rule protections and what happens after I apply? Contact Northwest Gas to set up a Cold Weather Rule payment plan. If you make and keep a Cold Weather Rule payment plan, you are protected from disconnection or will be reconnected if already disconnected.

Right to appeal

If you and Northwest Gas cannot agree on the amount of your Payment Plan, a requested change to your Payment Plan, or your income level, you have the right to appeal. Northwest Gas will send you a notice of your right to appeal. This will include a form that must be sent to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC) within 10 working days after it is mailed to you.

The MPUC will review your appeal. During this time Northwest Gas will not shut off your service or will reconnect your service if you have already been disconnected. The MPUC has 20 working days to make a decision about your Payment Plan after receiving the appeal form.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE, CONSERVATION & WEATHERIZATION PROVIDERS

If you have trouble paying your utility bills, the following local agencies may be able to provide payment assistance:

Cottonwood County

United Community Action Partnership
(UCAP).....1-800-658-2448
1400 S. Saratoga St, Marshall MN 56258

Kanabec County

Lakes & Pines Community Action
1-800-832-6082
1700 Maple Ave, Mora, MN 55051

Murray County

SW Minnesota Opportunity Council
(SMOC).....1-800-658-2444
1106 3rd Ave, Worthington, MN 56187

Cass and Beltrami Counties

Bi-County Community Action
Program
(BICAP).....1-800-332-7161
PO BOX 579, Bemidji, MN

Cass County- Leech Lake Tribe

Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe
(LLBO).....1-866-864-8668
190 Sailstar Dr, Cass Lake MN

Blue Earth, Faribault, Sibley Counties

Minnesota Valley Action Council
(MVAC).....1-800-767-7139
706 N. Victory Dr, Mankato, MN

Itasca County

Kootasca Community Action
.....1-877-687-1163
201 NW 4th St, Grand Rapids, MN



Energy Assistance Applications Be Found At: <https://mn.gov/commerce-stat/pdfs/application-english.pdf>

Your Local County Human Services

County Human Services departments offer cash, emergency, food, housing and medical assistance. <http://mn.gov/portal/government/local/counties>

The Salvation Army HeatShare

HeatShare provides emergency utility Assistance 1-800-842-7279 <http://salvationarmynorth.org/programs-that-help/basic-needs/heatshare/>

United Way 2-1-1

United Way 2-1-1 is a free and confidential service that can help you find local resources. Dial 2-1-1. <http://www.211.org>

ENERGY SAVINGS TIPS

- Caulk and weather strip cracks around doors and window frames. Block openings at bottom of doors to prevent drafts.
- Lower the setting on your thermostat at night and dress warmly.
- Lower the setting on your water heater to 120 degrees F (normal/medium).
- Open shades during winter days to let the warm sunlight in and close the shades at night.
- Wash clothes with warm water and rinse them in cold water.
- Close all windows tightly and use locks to prevent cold air leaking in. Cover all windows with plastic.
- Broken window should be repaired immediately and close all storm windows.
- Window air conditioning units should be covered or removed during the heating season.
- Furnace filters should be kept clean.
- Furnaces should be checked for safe and efficient operation at least once a year.
- Close off unused rooms.

THIRD PARTY NOTIFICATION

Northwest Gas offers all customers the opportunity to have a third party notified if their gas service is to be shut off. A third party could be a friend, relative, church or community agency. This program helps those who live alone, senior citizens, those who are disabled and customers who do not read English.

How it works. The third party receives copies of all disconnection notices mailed to the customer but is NOT required to pay the bills. By volunteering, the third party is able to receive and give information about personal circumstances and make a payment plan with Northwest Gas for the customer. This helps avoid the hardship that would result from service disconnection.

How to request third party notification. If you want to name a third party, please complete, print and mail the Third Party Notice form to Northwest Gas. If you know someone who could use third party help, please give them this form.

REQUEST FOR THIRD PARTY NOTIFICATION

Account Number _____	
Customer Name _____	THIRD PARTY NAME _____
Address _____	Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____	City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Phone _____	Phone _____
	Third Party Signature _____

Northwest Gas has my permission to provide information to and accept information from the third party.

Customer Signature _____ Date _____

Northwest Gas will make every effort to send a copy of the Disconnection Notice to the third party specified. Northwest Gas assumes no liability for failure of a third party to receive or act upon the notice. For your convenience, complete this form and return it with your bill statement or mail to:

Northwest Gas
PO Box 721
Mapleton, MN 56065
Phone: (507) 524-4103
Toll Free: 1-800-367-6964
Fax: (507) 524-4104

Other important information

If a medical emergency exists in the home, or if an interruption of service affects necessary medical equipment, please contact Northwest Gas at 507-524-4103 or 800-367-6964.