

## **What if you can't pay your utilities during the coronavirus crisis?**

- Most utility companies can NOT shut off your utilities during the coronavirus public health emergency, even if you can't pay your bill.
  - You are still responsible for paying bills but if you can't pay, ask for a payment plan.
  - Contact your utility company and let them know that you can't pay due to the economic impacts of coronavirus. Keep documentation of how you contacted them and who you talked to.
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If you have been affected by coronavirus you might have trouble paying your bills. You may be able to get help if you can't pay your utilities.

Most utility companies in Washington state have changed their rules and will NOT cut off your utilities during the coronavirus emergency. The Governor of Washington state ordered utility companies to do everything possible to prevent shut offs due to non-payment, to make payment plans and reverse late fees.

The changes do not make utilities free. You will still get bills. You are still responsible to pay the bills. If you can't pay then utility companies can make a payment plan with you to pay what you owe later, and can waive late fees and penalties.

### **What can I do to protect myself if I can't pay my utility bill?**

To protect yourself from getting your utilities shutoff and to prevent late fees, contact your utility company. Contact them in writing or by phone.

Ask for a deferred payment plan and for all your late fees to be reversed. A deferred payment plan is an agreement to pay an affordable monthly amount that you would start to pay AFTER the coronavirus emergency is over.

It's important to document your communication. If you send an email or write a letter keep a copy. If you call, write down the date, time and notes from the conversation.

### How do I know who to contact?

There are many different utility companies. Look on your utility bills to find out what company provides your services. You may get several different bills from different companies. Contact each one. You will need a separate payment plan for each company.

Below is a list of many of the utility companies in WA, the relief that they have announced and how to contact them.

AVISTA	Suspended collections and shutoffs, will make payment plans	(800) 227-9187 <a href="https://myavista.com/safety/covid-19-response">https://myavista.com/safety/covid-19-response</a>
Cascade Natural Gas	Suspended shutoffs for non payment. May waive late fees. Will make payment plans.	888-522-1130 <a href="https://www.cngc.com/in-the-community/covid-19-response/">https://www.cngc.com/in-the-community/covid-19-response/</a>
Centurylink	Will not shut off internet or phone for residential or small businesses due to non-payment, if financial hardship caused by coronavirus issues.  May waive late fees.	<a href="https://news.centurylink.com/covid-19">https://news.centurylink.com/covid-19</a>  Information in Spanish <a href="http://centurylink_es.mediaroom.com/covid-19">http://centurylink_es.mediaroom.com/covid-19</a>  Information in Portuguese <a href="http://centurylink_pt.mediaroom.com/covid-19">http://centurylink_pt.mediaroom.com/covid-19</a>
Frontier Communications	No statement on their website regarding shutoffs or late fees.	<a href="https://frontier.com/resources/covid-19">https://frontier.com/resources/covid-19</a>
Pacific Power	Suspending disconnections and late fees	<a href="https://www.pacificpower.net/about/newsroom/service-safety-covid-19.html">https://www.pacificpower.net/about/newsroom/service-safety-covid-19.html</a> 1-888-221-7070

Puget Sound Energy	Suspending shutoffs and late fees	<a href="https://www.pse.com/press-release/details/learn-about-our-covid-19-response-plan">https://www.pse.com/press-release/details/learn-about-our-covid-19-response-plan</a>  <b>1-888-225-5773</b>
NW Natural	Suspending shutoffs and late fees	<a href="https://www.nwnatural.com/customer-service/coronavirus">https://www.nwnatural.com/customer-service/coronavirus</a> 800-422-4012
Washington Water	Suspending shutoffs and late fees. Restoring previous shutoffs for non payment	<a href="https://www.wawater.com/latest_news/2020-0310-safe-from-coronavirus/">https://www.wawater.com/latest_news/2020-0310-safe-from-coronavirus/</a>  (877) 408-4060.  Info available in multiple languages at link above

To learn more:

- See online resources at Northwest Justice Project  
<https://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/issues/health/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Call the WAISN Hotline at 1-844-724-3737

**Sources of information:**

[Washington State Utility Commission - Resources for COVID 19](#)

[Governor Proclamation - WA State Utilities and Transportation Commission Ratepayer Assistance \(3/24/20\)](#)

[Governor announcement of eviction moratorium and halt of utility shutoffs \(3/18/20\)](#)