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## Media Release

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **OREGON PUC STRENGTHENS UTILITY CUSTOMER PROTECTIONS AND ADVANCES NEW MEASURES TO REDUCE ENERGY INSECURITY**

**SALEM, Ore.** – The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) has approved new rules and interim actions designed to continue expanding protections for residential utility customers, especially those facing financial hardship, medical needs, or severe weather conditions. These changes apply to customers served by Oregon’s investor-owned utilities, including Avista, Cascade Natural Gas, Idaho Power, NW Natural, PacifiCorp, and Portland General Electric (PGE).

The new and updated rules are aimed at making utility services safer, more affordable, and easier to access. They also expand protections during emergencies, such as extreme weather, air quality, and wildfire evacuations, and help prevent unnecessary disconnections.

Below is a list of key customer protection expansions as a result of new and updated rules.

- Easier access to utility service – Utilities will now accept additional forms of identification to initiate service.
- Lower reconnection costs – No reconnection fees when utilities can do so remotely or for income-qualified customers and those with medical certificates at any time. Additionally, no reconnection fee or outstanding balance payment required for income qualified or medical certificate holders seeking reconnection after a wildfire evacuation or severe weather event.
- More time to pay past-due bills – Customers seeking reconnection now have up to six billing cycles to catch up on overdue utility balances, expanding on the previous two billing cycles.
- Stronger weather-related shutoff protections – Disconnections will be paused during and for 48 hours after a severe weather event for all residential customers.
- Clearer Information about customer protections – Utilities will offer simple explanations of available protections in bill inserts, online, and through community action agencies and customer service teams.

In addition to the new and updated rules, the PUC also approved additional temporary measures following growing concern about energy insecurity and the need for stronger customer protections from Oregon legislators, energy justice advocates, and PUC staff, in light of federal policy changes and ongoing uncertainty.

The approved temporary actions directing Avista, Cascade Natural Gas, Idaho Power, NW Natural, PacifiCorp, and PGE to:

- Temporarily submit monthly reports that will regularly track and monitor energy burden metrics for residential customers.
- Provide the option for 24-month Time Payment Arrangements for customers with overdue balances on their utility bills who request additional flexibility through at least May 1, 2026.
- Provide a minimum 30-day pause on disconnections for customers who self-report economic hardship through March 1, 2026.

Additionally, Idaho Power, PacifiCorp and PGE are directed to:

- Implement a temporary disconnection moratorium for bill discount program participants and customers with medical certificates through March 1, 2026, with no late fees assessed during this time.
- Provide a one-time arrearage forgiveness grant of up to \$500 for eligible low-income customers, automatically applied to past-due balances on March 2026 bills.

“These rules and temporary measures reflect months of collaboration among utilities, community organizations and advocates, and PUC staff,” said PUC Chair Letha Tawney. “They provide some of the strongest customer protections in the country and are critical steps to protect our most vulnerable neighbors by reducing unnecessary disconnections, protecting health and safety during emergencies, and supporting low-income households.”

For more information about available customer protections, residents are encouraged to contact their electric or natural gas utility service providers directly.

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*The PUC regulates customer rates and services of the state’s investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities, including Portland General Electric, Idaho Power, Pacific Power, Avista, Cascade Natural, and NW Natural. The PUC also regulates landline telephone providers and select water companies. The PUC’s mission is to ensure Oregonians have access to safe, reliable, and fairly priced utility services that advance state policy and promote the public interest. We use an inclusive process to evaluate differing viewpoints and visions of the public interest and arrive at balanced, well-reasoned, independent decisions supported by fact and law. For more information about the PUC, visit [oregon.gov/puc](http://oregon.gov/puc).*