

Media Release



Oregon PUC reminds customers about summer disconnection moratoriums and availability of assistance programs

SALEM, Ore. – The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) is reminding residential and small commercial customers that Oregon’s regulated electric and natural gas utilities are required to pause service disconnections for non-payment during certain summer weather or air quality conditions, and when customers are under a Level 2 or Level 3 wildfire evacuation notice.

These protections apply to the investor-owned utilities regulated by the PUC, including Portland General Electric (PGE), Pacific Power, Idaho Power, NW Natural, Avista Natural Gas, and Cascade Natural Gas.

The PUC requires these utilities to activate a disconnection moratorium for the following events in the areas they serve:

- **Severe air quality events (electric and natural gas):**
A moratorium on disconnection for non-payment is required on any day when the Department of Environmental Quality issues an air-quality advisory or when the Air Quality Index (AQI) is forecast to reach 100 or higher. Both electric and natural gas utilities may not disconnect residential or small commercial customers for nonpayment during these conditions.
- **Extreme heat events (electric only):**
Electric utilities may not disconnect residential customers for non-payment starting 24 hours before an extreme heat warning, extreme heat watch, or heat advisory is forecast. If the heat notice is issued with less than 24 hours’ notice, utilities must immediately pause disconnections once the alert is posted.
- **Level 2 or Level 3 wildfire evacuations (electric and natural gas):**
Electric and natural gas utilities will make best efforts to avoid disconnecting customers for non-payment when customers are under a Level 2 or Level 3 wildfire evacuation notice by the Oregon Department of Emergency Management. The moratorium begins when the evacuation notice is issued.

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Moratoriums generally remain in effect for 48 hours after a qualifying event ends. Customers who were disconnected shortly before a moratorium began may be eligible for no-cost reconnection. Utilities must make best efforts to complete reconnections upon request, and reconnection fees may apply.

PUC Chair Letha Tawney emphasizes the importance of these protections. “The PUC has worked hard to ensure Oregonians are protected during potentially dangerous air quality and heat events or during wildfire evacuations,” she said. “Service disconnections for non-payment during hazardous conditions can put lives at risk. Pausing shutoffs along with Commission required utility assistance programs help keep customers connected when they need it most.”

“As Oregon continues to be challenged by this unprecedented wildfire season, it’s important that services remain connected,” Governor Tina Kotek said. “No Oregonian affected by wildfire should have to face the loss of power during this emergency. My focus continues to remain on protecting lives, supporting communities, and ensuring families can stay safe.”

Utilities may still need to disconnect power to a high risk area during extreme fire weather to prevent ignitions. In those cases, the utility is carefully weighing the risk of a damaging fire against the difficult impacts of an outage on vulnerable communities. The utility will restore power as quickly as is safe to do so.

Customers can contact their utility to learn more about these protections, or to discuss payment plans, discounts for customers with lower incomes and assistance programs if they are behind on their bill. For help connecting with your utility or understanding your rights, contact the PUC’s Consumer Services Team at 503-378-6600 or 800-522-2404, TTY or dial 711, or email puc.consumer@puc.oregon.gov.

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