

Welcome to UM 2114 Disconnection Practices - Workshop #1

- ▶ July 22, 2021
- ▶ Ezell Watson III
- ▶ Oregon Public Utility Commission

- ▶ Building the Stage - Operating Agreements
- ▶ Background & Agenda Review
- ▶ Breakout Discussion & Report Out
 - ▶ Roles
 - ▶ Additional Opportunities for Feedback via digital form
- ▶ Brainstorming Activity



Brought to you by.....

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Operating Agreements

1. Be energy efficient: (Allow room for multiple perspectives. Leave time for everyone.)
2. Stay engaged (connected) without tripping the circuit breaker. (don't overheat)
3. Consider environmental conditions (mute when not speaking)
4. Seek understanding (listen to understand, not to respond)
5. Group Norms (suggestions from participants)
6. Community Suggested Agreements

Current Protections Against Utility Service Disconnection

July 22, 2021

Michael Dougherty

Oregon Public Utility Commission

OAR 860-021-0320

Disconnection of Service on Weekends

This rule requires that utilities NOT disconnect service on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, any state recognized holiday, and the day before a state recognized holiday (exceptions include safety, voluntary disconnects, “no signer” cuts, and theft)

Disconnection of Service on Weekends

Who Qualifies:

Anyone who is a customer with the utility. It does not apply to someone taking service who has not both applied for service and been accepted as a customer by the utility. (Customer Definition: Someone who has applied for service, been accepted, and is receiving service).

Process to Obtain Protection:

Anyone who has “customer” status is automatically protected. No action required by customer.

How Many Customers usually take advantage of this protection:

All utility “customers” are protected.

OAR 860-021-0407

Severe Weather Moratorium

This rule prohibits disconnections of residential customers when the forecast high temperature for any day is less than 32 degrees, and remains in effect until the forecast high reaches 32 degrees or higher. It also prohibits disconnections on days when a Heat Advisory has been declared, and remains in effect until the Heat Advisory is lifted.

Severe Weather Moratorium

Who Qualifies:

All residential customers in a geographic location where a moratorium has been declared by the utility.

Process to Obtain Protection:

Anyone who has “customer” status is automatically protected. No action required by customer.

How Many Customers usually take advantage of this protection:

All residential utility “customers” are protected.

OAR 860-021-0510

Medical Certificates

This rule prohibits utilities from disconnecting the service of a customer who has obtained an Emergency Medical Certificate from a “qualified medical professional” stating disconnection would significantly endanger the physical health of the customer or a member of the household.

However, the rule also states a customer is not excused from paying for their energy service. In order to avoid disconnection, the medical certificate holder is required to enter into a time payment agreement (TPA). The Commission generally expects TPA terms which are longer than the norm, and which meet the needs of the customer. If the utility and customer cannot agree on the term, the customer may appeal to the PUC who may set the term.

If the customer experiences a financial hardship, the TPA can be renegotiated once.

Utilities are required to notify Consumer Services when they propose to disconnect a Med Cert holder.

Medical Certificates

Who Qualifies:

Any customer or household member whose life would be significantly endangered by the loss of utility service, and who obtain a Medical Certification from a qualified medical professional who will attest to that.

Process to Obtain Protection:

Customer must request their qualified medical professional issue a Medical Certificate attesting to the circumstances which qualify the customer for the Med Cert. The medical professional submits the Med Cert form to the utility.

How Many Customers usually take advantage of this protection:

Since early 2000, there has been a voluntary moratorium on disconnections in place, so utilities have not been requiring medical certificates. For representation of a normal year, the following numbers are for 2019:

Active Medical Certificates 2019

Pacific Power - 863

Portland General - 3,556

Northwest Natural - 215

Avista Utilities - 1

Cascade Nat Gas - 10

Idaho Power - 15