

Governor Suspends Utility Rules to Pave Way for Additional Consumer Protections

Written by GOV Press Wisconsin

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<http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/high-voltage-lines-farms-s5.jpg>



Evers wants to make sure folks don't have to choose between keeping their utilities on and paying for other essentials.

MADISON - Gov. Tony Evers issued Emergency Order #11 on Sunday, suspending several utility-related administrative rules, paving the way for the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) to temporarily order further consumer protections amid the COVID-19 public health emergency. The order can be found [here](#).



“It is critically important to give people flexibility during this emergency, when paychecks might be disrupted, to keep the lights and heat on and water flowing,” said Gov. Evers. “We’re making sure that folks don’t have to make the critical choice between keeping their utilities on and paying for other essentials.”

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Immediately following the governor's emergency order, PSC Chairperson Rebecca Cameron Valcq directed regulated utilities in the state to take the following actions for the duration of the emergency:

1. Stop utility disconnection for nonpayment for all customers, including commercial, industrial, and farm accounts. Previously this applied to residential accounts only;
2. Cease assessing late fees to customer accounts;
3. Halt the practice of requiring deposits from customers for reconnection of service;
4. Allow deferred payment agreements for all customers who request them;
5. Remove any administrative barriers for customers establishing or reestablishing utility service; and
6. Authorize water utilities to provide budget billing arrangements to customers. Electric and natural gas utilities are allowed to do this under current rules.

"I want to thank the governor for his prompt action on this and our utility providers for their continued efforts to keep our homes and businesses supplied with light, heat, and water," said Chairperson Valcq. "This is a difficult time for many. We're asking that those who are able to pay their utility bills, please continue to do so. For those who can't, today's order allows them to remain connected."

Previously, the PSC directed utilities to cease disconnecting residential service for nonpayment until the state public health emergency had been lifted. Additionally, utilities were required to make reasonable attempts to reconnect service to an occupied dwelling that had been disconnected.