

## RESIDENTIAL UTILITY CUSTOMER PROTECTIONS

(Effective January 1, 2022)

### Established by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU)

*If you have questions about these consumer protections, you should contact your utility company at the number on your bill. If you have a complaint about your utility company or if your services are in jeopardy of being shut off, you should call the BPU at 800-624-0241 for assistance. Note: The BPU regulates only investor owned utility companies.*

1. You have the right to utility service if you are a qualified applicant.
2. You have the right to a budget billing plan from your electric, gas, water, or wastewater utility.
3. You are entitled to at least one deferred payment plan within a twelve-month period.
4. You have the right to apply for utility assistance programs which may include arrearage forgiveness. Learn more by calling your utility company or by calling 2-1-1. Information is also available online at [www.nj211.org/utility-assistance-programs](http://www.nj211.org/utility-assistance-programs).
5. A residential electric, gas, water, or wastewater customer who has been disconnected, shall have their service reconnected upon request if they can demonstrate they have applied to one of the following eligible assistance programs: Universal Service Fund; Low Income Home Energy Assistance; Payment Assistance for Gas and Electric, or Low Income Household Water Assistance.<sup>1</sup> Also, the customer shall not have been enrolled in any of the assistance programs listed above during the prior year.
6. You have the right to have any complaint you make against your utility company handled promptly by that utility company.
7. You have the right to have your utility complaints and concerns investigated.
8. Your service may not be terminated for non-payment of disputed charges during a BPU investigation.
9. You have the right to have your meter tested free of charge once a year by your utility company if you suspect it is not working properly. For a \$5 fee, the meter test will be conducted under the supervision of the staff of the BPU.
10. You have the right to a written notice of termination from your utility company at least ten days prior to the discontinuance of service.
11. You have the right to gas and electric utilities service **from November 15 to March 15** without fear of termination of such service(s) under the Winter Termination Program. If you are a participant in an energy assistance program or a gas and/or electric customer having financial difficulties paying

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<sup>1</sup> The Low Income Household Water Assistance program is a new program designed for water utility customers that is currently being developed by the Department of Consumer Affairs.

- your bill, you can request the company enroll you in a budget plan based on your ability to pay provided you make good faith payments toward all reasonable bills for service.
12. You have the right to receive posted notice of any impending shutoff if you live in a multi-family dwelling. This notice must be posted in a common area and/or sent individually to occupants.
  13. You have the right to have a "diversion of service" investigation if you suspect the level of consumption reflected in your utility bill is unexplainably high.
  14. Service shall not be shut-off for non-payment of repair or merchandise charges. No notice threatening discontinuance based on these charges may be given.
  15. You have the option of having a deposit refund applied to your account as a credit or having the deposit refunded by separate check.
  16. A utility may not impose late fees, interest, or liens on residential customer accounts due to late payments.
  17. Your residential services may not be shut-off on holidays, weekends, or after 1:00 p.m. prior to a holiday or weekend, or if you have a valid medical emergency.