



NEWS RELEASE

STATE EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER

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State leaders outline protections, assistance available for energy utility customers

LANSING, MICH. The State of Michigan is working with utility companies to ensure protections are in place for customers as efforts to help slow the spread of the coronavirus impact families and businesses across the state.

Major utilities including the state's two largest, DTE Energy and Consumers Energy, have enacted moratoriums on service disconnections, and are extending flexible payment plans, for low-income customers, seniors and those impacted by illness or job losses related to the pandemic. Gov. Gretchen Whitmer's [Stay Home, Stay Safe executive order](#) directs Michiganders to stay in their homes except for approved reasons such as critical infrastructure jobs or performing tasks necessary for health and safety, at least through April 13, 2020.

"Michiganders are tough, and we will get through this emergency by helping one another," Gov. Gretchen Whitmer said. "We are fortunate that utilities across Michigan have stepped up with proactive policies to assist those in need during this crisis."

"During these unprecedented times with a variety of concerns, worrying about utility bills should not be one of them," Attorney General Dana Nessel said. "As Chief Consumer Advocate for this state, I am heartened to hear Michigan utilities voluntarily stepping up to help their customers."

Robert Gordon, Director of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, said maintaining electric and heating service is critical in the battle to reduce the spread of the coronavirus. "Michiganders need to stay home, and many are dealing with lost income," Gordon said. "We must do everything we can to keep people safe at home while we work to reduce the impact of the coronavirus, and we appreciate our partners at energy utilities throughout the state who are stepping up to pause service disconnections and provide flexibility to customers in need."

Utilities, including those regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission as well as municipal and cooperative owned utilities, have instituted policies to help protect vulnerable customers during this crisis, ranging from suspended disconnections and assistance to reconnect service to payment assistance. Funds also are available through partnering organizations to help eligible customers who are behind on their utility bills. In an effort to serve Michigan families struggling with energy costs related to COVID-19 as effectively as possible, the Department of Health and Human Services will take a number of actions to streamline the application process for its primary energy assistance program, State Emergency Relief.

“We encourage anyone who anticipates difficulty paying their energy bills not to wait, and to reach out to their utility company as soon as they can to work out payment options,” said Sally Talberg, Chairman of the Michigan Public Service Commission, which regulates investor-owned energy companies in Michigan. “Each utility may vary, but whether you have a medical or financial need, payment protections and assistance are available.”

Michiganders who use propane for home heating also are eligible for income-based assistance programs. Customers with heating costs that they are unable to pay should first contact their energy supplier and explain their situation before they run out of fuel.

Home energy assistance

- **Be Proactive** - Contact your utility company as soon as you know you will be unable to pay your bill on time.
- Call 2-1-1 or click on www.mi211.org to learn about agencies in your county that may assist with your energy bill.
- State Emergency Relief (SER) may help low-income households pay part of their heating or electric bills, assist in keeping utilities in service, or have service restored. The program is available year-round. Call your local Department of Health and Human Services office for information or apply on [MI Bridges](#). Households must apply for SER assistance prior to receiving any Michigan Energy Assistance Program services.
- The Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) works with households to provide supplemental bill payment assistance and self-sufficiency services to low-income residents statewide. At the time of SER application, applicants will be able to choose a MEAP provider to work with. A list of organizations that deliver MEAP services can be found on the [MPSC's website](#). MEAP grantees are all community partners with MDHHS and can help applicants to navigate the MDHHS application process.
- Connect with an [MDHHS community partner](#) to help work through the process of applying for assistance.
- Home Heating Credit qualified persons may receive a credit to help pay winter heating bills. Apply for a Home Heating Credit if you are low-income or receive public assistance or unemployment compensation. Eligible customers must meet guidelines based on household income, exemptions and heating costs. You must apply by Sept. 30 each year. The application form (MI-1040CR-7) can be requested from the Michigan Department of Treasury at 517-636-4486, or visit website at www.michigan.gov/treasury.

Gov. Whitmer's executive order also directed all Michigan businesses and operations to temporarily suspend in-person operations that are not necessary to sustain or protect life. For business customers, utility companies may be able to offer flexible payment terms or suggestions to manage utility bills under these extraordinary circumstances.

Safety tips

Under Gov. Whitmer's stay-home order, utility workers are considered essential as they work to keep Michigan's energy infrastructure safe and reliable. Their health is critical to maintaining energy service.

- Please practice social distancing and do not approach workers if you see them outside. If a utility worker comes to your home on a service call, please maintain a minimum of six feet of distance from them.
- If you experience a power outage or an emergency such as a wire down, contact your utility as you normally would.
- New utility service hookups and construction of new utility service lines may be delayed as utilities prioritize work and protect employees and the public; contact your utility to see if your schedule may be impacted.

Patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

The best prevention for viruses, such as influenza, the common cold or COVID-19, is to:

- If you think you have symptoms of COVID-19, call your health care provider. If you do not have a health care provider, call the nearest hospital. Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for 20 seconds. If not available, use hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or upper sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- If you are sick, stay home, and avoid contact with others.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from others when in a public setting.

Information around this outbreak is changing rapidly. The latest information is available at www.Michigan.gov/Coronavirus and www.CDC.gov/Coronavirus.

Utility contact information

For specific information about bill assistance or flexible payment plans, contact your utility directly.

Investor-owned utilities

Alpena Power Co.	989-358-4900, www.alpenapower.com
Aurora Gas Co.	989-733-6625, www.pieg.com
Citizens Gas Fuel Co.	800-982-2831, www.citizensgasfuel.com
Consumers Energy Co.	800-477-5050, www.consumersenergy.com
DTE Energy Co.	800-477-4747, www.dteenergy.com
Indiana Michigan Power Co.	800-672-2231, www.indianamichiganpower.com
Michigan Gas Utilities	800-401-6402, accel.michigangasutilities.com
Northern States Power Co. (Xcel)	800-895-4999, www.xcelenergy.com
Semco Energy Gas Co.	800-624-2019, www.semcoenergygas.com
Superior Energy Co.	888-468-2828, www.secnaturalgas.com
Upper Michigan Energy Resources for former WEPCO customers 800-450-7260	800-242-9137, www.uppermichiganenergy.com
for former WPSC customers Upper Peninsula Power Co.	800-562-7680, www.uppco.com
Wisconsin Electric Power Co.	800-242-9137, www.we-energies.com

Municipal utilities

Baraga	906-353-6237, www.villageofbaraga.com .
Bay City	989-894-8350, www.baycitymi.org
Charlevoix	231-547-3273, www.cityofcharlevoix.org
Chelsea	734-475-1771, www.city-chelsea.org
Clinton	517-456-7494, www.villageofclinton.org
Coldwater	517-279-9531, www.coldwater.org
Croswell	810-679-2299, www.cityofcroswell.com
Crystal Falls	906-875-3212, www.crystalfalls.org
Daggett	906-753-6931
Dowagiac	269-782-2195, www.cityofdowagiac.com
Eaton Rapids	517-663-8118, www.cityofeatonrapids.com
Escanaba	906-786-0552, www.escanaba.org
Gladstone	906-428-3737, www.gladstonemi.org

Grand Haven	616.846.6250, www.ghblp.org
Harbor Springs	231-526-2122, www.cityofharborsprings.com
Hart	231-923-0012, www.cityofhart.org
Hillsdale	517-437-3387, www.cityofhillsdale.org/bpu
Holland	616-355-1500, www.hollandbpw.com
L'Anse	906-524-6116, www.villageoflanse.org
Lansing	517-702-6006, www.lbwl.com
Lowell	616-897-8402, www.lowell-light.org
Marquette	906-228-0311, www.mblp.org
Marshall	269-558-0329, www.cityofmarshall.com
Negaunee	906-475-7700, www.cityofnegaunee.com
Newberry	906-293-3433, www.villageofnewberry.com
Niles	269-683-4700, www.nilesmi.org
Norway	906-563-9961, www.norwaymi.gov
Paw Paw	269-657-3148, www.pawpaw.net
Petoskey	231-347-2500, www.petoskey.us
Portland	517-647-7531, www.portland-michigan.org
St. Louis	989-681-2137, www.stlouismi.com
Sebewaing	989-883-2700, www.slandw.com
South Haven	269-637-0700, www.south-haven.com
Stephenson	906-753-6228, www.stephenson-mi.com
Sturgis	269-659-7287, www.sturgismi.gov
Traverse City	231-922-4431, www.tclp.org
Union City	517-741-8591, www.visitunioncity.com
Wakefield	906-229-5131, www.cityofwakefield.org
Wyandotte	734-324-7100, www.wyandotte.net
Zeeland	616-772-6212, www.zeelandbpw.com

Rural electric co-operatives

Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Assoc.	906-428-4141, www.algerdelta.com
Cherryland Electric Cooperative	231-486-9200, www.cecelec.com
Great Lakes Energy Cooperative	888-485-2537, www.gtlakes.com
HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Co-op	800-562-8232, www.homeworks.org
Midwest Energy & Communications	800-492-5989, www.teammidwest.com
Ontonagon County REA	906-884-4151, www.ontonagon.coop
Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op	989-733-8515, www.pieg.com
Thumb Electric Cooperative	989-658-8571, www.tecmi.coop
Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative	231-775-5700, www.wpsci.com

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