



## CONSUMER ALERT: Utility bill assistance available now

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May 26, 2021

### *Disconnection ban ends on July 31*

**LACEY, Wash.** – Customers should take action now to get help with overdue utility bills, before the ban on disconnections expires on July 31. Web link: <https://www.utc.wa.gov/news/2021/consumer-alert-utility-bill-assistance-available-now>

To help struggling customers, the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) approved more than [\\$40 million in COVID-19 bill relief programs](#) for customers of PacifiCorp, Puget Sound Energy, Avista, Cascade Natural Gas, and [Northwest Natural Gas](#).

Customers are eligible for up to \$2,500 per year in additional bill assistance if they earn no more than 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

The customer assistance funds are available in addition to federal Low Income Home Energy Assistant Program (LIHEAP) grants or existing bill assistance programs, and long-term payment plan options, and can be combined with other grants to help reduce outstanding balances.

To apply for assistance, contact your utility company. Whether or not you qualify for the COVID-19 assistance funds, utilities must work with customers to go over their options such as payment assistance, payment arrangements, balance billing, and due date changes. **Even if you think you don't qualify for help, you should still call your utility today.**

In addition, deposits, late fees, and disconnection fees are on hold until February 2022.

For more information, visit the UTC's [Covid Customer Assistance](#) page. Customers facing disconnection should contact the UTC's Consumer Protection division: [visit online](#), call 888-333-WUTC (9882), or email [consumer@utc.wa.gov](mailto:consumer@utc.wa.gov). Translation services are available.

For help with water and wastewater bills, the federal [Low Income Household Water Assistance Program \(LIHWAP\)](#) has grants available. The FCC also offers the [Emergency Broadband Benefit](#) to help households afford internet service during the pandemic.

On April 17, 2020, Gov. Jay Inslee issued Proclamation 20-23.2, which bans all energy, water, and telecommunication companies in Washington from disconnecting customers due to nonpayment, refusing to reconnect residential customers who were disconnected for nonpayment, and charging late fees or reconnection fees. The proclamation is currently set to expire July 31, 2021.

The UTC regulates the rates and services of the state's investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities, landline telephone companies, and private water systems among other industries. It is the commission's responsibility to ensure regulated companies provide safe and reliable service to customers at reasonable rates, while allowing them the opportunity to earn a fair profit.



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