



Public Service Commission Chairman Lane's Column



January 25, 2021

Deferred Payment Plans for Overdue Utility Bills

Many of our fellow West Virginians continue to suffer from the effects of the deadly COVID-19 pandemic. One of the most unfortunate lasting impacts is the devastation the pandemic has caused to our economy. Far too many people continue to be unemployed or underemployed and continue to struggle to pay their bills.

For those who find themselves in the unusual situation of falling behind on utility bills, there is a tool at your disposal of which you should take advantage.

The Public Service Commission requires that customers who have been notified their service is scheduled to be terminated for non-payment be given an opportunity to enter into a deferred payment agreement. Customers who have accrued an uncontested outstanding balance they are unable to pay, may request the utility put them on a deferred payment plan and allow them up to 12 months to get caught up on their bill. This request must be made before the utility company discontinues their service. Once service has been disconnected the company is not required to honor the request for a 12-month payment plan and may require a substantial portion of the balance due be paid in order to restore service.

A deferred payment plan allows customers to pay off a large balance over time, as long as the customer makes the agreed upon payments as due each month. Utilities are encouraged to work with customers in developing a reasonable payment plan. Once a deferred payment plan has been negotiated and agreed to, if the customer's financial condition changes significantly or the existing agreement results in hardship, then the utility is required to renegotiate it.

Customers should contact the Public Service Commission prior to their scheduled termination if they need assistance in establishing a deferred payment agreement with their utility company. Our staff will work with the utility and the customer in an attempt to resolve the situation.

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