

RESOURCES FOR TEXAS RESIDENTIAL CONSUMERS AFFECTED BY COVID-19

The Texas Office of Public Utility Counsel (“OPUC”) is working hard to ensure that the public has all necessary information related to the novel coronavirus. OPUC has created a [COVID-19 Consumer Resource Center](#), which provides the latest updates on assistance that is available to help residential consumers who are experiencing COVID-19-related financial hardship maintain their electricity, water and wastewater service.

On March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott issued a Declaration of State of Disaster for all counties in Texas due to the COVID-19 pandemic. On April 12, 2020, Governor Abbott extended the Declaration of State of Disaster for all counties in Texas.

On March 26, 2020, the Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) responded to Governor Abbott’s Declaration of State of Disaster for all counties in Texas with a series of measures to address the impact of COVID-19-related financial hardship on residential consumers. The PUCT issued additional orders on April 17, 2020.

Please find below a summary of the actions taken in the PUCT’s orders:

- For areas of the state open to retail electric competition, the PUCT created a COVID-19 Electricity Relief Program under which eligible residential customers who are experiencing COVID-19-related financial hardship and qualify for unemployment at the Texas Workforce Commission (“TWC”) may contact the state’s Low Income List Administrator (“LILA”) to request enrollment in the program. After providing proof of unemployment from TWC and other required information within 30 days of contacting LILA, a residential customer will be added to a list under which their retail electric provider cannot disconnect their electricity service for non-payment. The program is effective from March 26, 2020 until July 17, 2020, unless extended by the PUCT.
- In areas of the state that are not open to retail electric competition, integrated electric utilities, such as El Paso Electric, Southwestern Public Service, Southwestern Electric Power Company and Entergy Texas, cannot disconnect residential customers for non-payment at this time. Residential consumers should contact these entities to request a deferred payment plan.
- If residential consumers receive electricity service from an electric cooperative or municipally owned utility, they should contact these entities directly to request information about any COVID-19-related assistance that they may be offering residential consumers. These entities are largely outside of the PUCT’s jurisdiction.
- Water and wastewater utilities that are regulated by the PUCT cannot disconnect residential customers for non-payment at this time. Residential consumers should contact these entities to request a deferred payment plan. This does not apply to communities, municipalities, districts, and non-profit Water Supply Corporations (WSC) that provide retail water and sewer utility service. Residential consumers of these entities should contact the governing body or elected board of their county, municipality, district and non-profit water supply and sewer service corporation (WSC) responsible for making decisions about disconnects during the COVID-19 crisis.