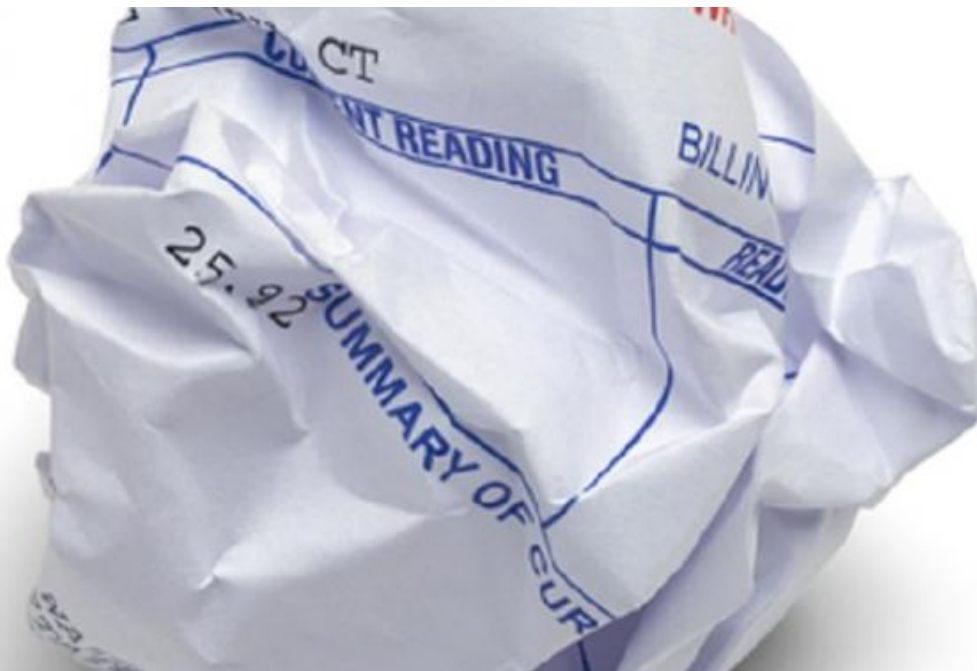


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Utility Rights: Shutoff and Bill Disputes



What procedures does the utility provider have to follow before shutting off my utilities?

The utility provider must give you advance notice as follows:

- Written notice by either mail 10 days before the shut-off or personal delivery 96 hours before the shut-off.
- At least 24 hours before the shut-off, the utility provider must make reasonable efforts to contact the customer either in writing, by posting a “door hanger” notice or making 2 telephone calls.

- On the day of the shut-off, the utility provider must make reasonable efforts to contact the customer, provide identification, state the purpose of the visit, and post a notice that contains the address and telephone number to contact to have the service restored.
- The utility provider cannot shut-off service due to your failure to pay the bill of another customer unless you received substantial benefit and use of the service. Service cannot be shut-off for failure of the previous owner or resident of the premises to pay a delinquent bill unless the previous owner or resident still lives on the premises. Service cannot be shut-off for service you received at a different address, but the bill can be combined with current bill. Service can be shut-off if payment is not made 21 days from the mailing of a combined bill and the above notice rules are followed.

What if I have a medical condition?

A utility provider is required to postpone a shut off for up to 21 days if the shut-off would aggravate an existing medical emergency of the customer, any member of the family or other person that lives in the unit. If requested you must provide the utility provider reasonable evidence of the necessity (e.g., a note from a medical professional).

How can I find financial assistance to pay my utility bill?

Call the United Way by dialing 211 or [1-800-427-4626](tel:1-800-427-4626) to locate agencies that may be able to assist you.

My gas or electric bill has an error on it. How can I dispute my bill?

If you don't agree with a utility bill, you must dispute the charge with the utility provider either in writing, in person or by telephone. Service cannot be shut off for charges legitimately disputed 24 hours prior to shut-off, but frivolous disputes will not stop a service shut-off. You must pay the undisputed part of the bill. You must cooperate in resolving the dispute.

Who can I call for help if I believe the utility provider is violating my rights?

Call the Missouri Public Service Commission ([1-800-392-4211](tel:1-800-392-4211)) or the Missouri Attorney General ([1-800-392-8222](tel:1-800-392-8222)).

Click on the link below for a printer friendly copy of the full article.

Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, Inc. (LSEM), provides this educational information as a public service. It is not legal advice. Sometimes the laws change. Always consult a lawyer, if you can, before taking legal action.

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