

Maryland Office of People's Counsel
ALERT
PSC Consumer Assistance Division (formerly OER)
Change in Handling Customer Extension or
Alternate Payment Plan Requests

For the last 14 years, the PSC has had an unofficial “fast track” process to handle customers who call with service termination/arrearage issues, and need extensions or payment plans to avoid service terminations. That process involved CAD staff contacting the utility and requesting extensions/requests to assist w/payment plans to avoid shut offs. That process ended as of COB on December 31, 2018.

For referrals that would have gone to the PSC, use this instruction instead:

- Ask if the customer has contacted the utility and requested an extension or payment plan

Yes: If already turned down or there is a dispute about the reasonableness of the payment plan, the Customer must file a complaint w/ the PSC – online or by mail (if termination threatened, should do it online)

No: Refer the customer to the utility

Extension only request: Customer should be specific with request in terms of time and reason

Request for payment plan: Customer should request extension and payment plan – should have a plan in mind based on circumstances:

- Amount of arrears
- Ability to pay
- Payment history
- Energy assistance benefits – has applied or will apply
- How much time has passed w/ payments

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Baltimore, Maryland 21202

410-767-8150; 800-207-4055

www.opc.maryland.gov

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- Reasons for past due bills
- Hardships, including medical issues, related to service shut-offs

If request is denied or customer believes the plan is unreasonable, the customer has the right to file a complaint with the PSC either online or by mail. If there is a pending termination, the customer should file online. The reason for the complaint is the denial of an extension or reasonable payment plan. The customer needs to be specific about their circumstances, and describe what they believe is a reasonable plan or extension.

NOTE:

For non-low-income customers, there is no mandate for a utility to grant an alternate payment plan, but with this change, we hope that the PSC will encourage them to do so

Under the current regulations, the utility can refuse to negotiate a plan for certain reasons, including:

- Default on a prior plan – If customer did default, explain the circumstances
- Commission of fraud or theft of energy – if these are the reasons and the customer disputes the allegations, the customer should file a complaint with the PSC

Attached is a list of utilities and phone numbers for customer referrals. If you notice a pattern of denials by local utilities, please contact Cindy Riely at Cynthia.riely@maryland.gov.

Reminder: We have updated our City and County Resource Guides. Please visit our website at www.opc.maryland.gov to view or download a copy of the Guide for your area. If you would like a hard copy of the guide, please send an e-mail at despina.sarioglou@maryland.gov , or call 410-767-8150 (1-800-207-4055) and ask to speak with Despina.

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**Gas and Electric Utilities
Contact Numbers for Customer Referrals
For Requests for Extension or Payment Arrangements**

BGE	800-685-2210
Pepco	202-833-7500
Delmarva Power	800-375-7117
Potomac Edison	800-736-3401
SMECO	888-440-3311
Washington Gas	703-750-1000, press #2 800-752-7520
Columbia Gas	888-460-4332
Chesapeake Utilities	800-427-0015
Choptank	877-892-0001

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