

Office of People's Counsel
www.opc.maryland.gov
[DLInfo OPC@maryland.gov](mailto:DLInfo_OPC@maryland.gov)
410-767-8150; 800-207-4055

COVID-19 and the State of Emergency How to Apply for Help with Your Gas or Electric Bill

Governor Hogan declared a State of Emergency for Maryland on March 5, 2020. On March 16, he announced an Executive Order prohibiting the termination of electric, gas, water and sewage services, as well as phone, cable, and internet services. The Order also prohibits the collection of late fees during this time.

The length of time for the suspension of late fees and terminations varies depending on your utility. Refer to our "[What Customers Should Know](#)" alerts on our website at www.opc.maryland.gov for more information on specific utility rules or call your local utility directly to learn more about the termination and late fee suspension dates.

[Should I still pay my utility bill during the suspension of terminations and late fees?](#)

Yes! You should make every effort to stay current on all utility payments. Once the suspension is lifted, you will be responsible for all utility usage and bill payments. It is important to make payments on your monthly bill and any past-due balances – even if they are partial payments. You will still receive your utility bill each month. Do your best to stay current on your utility payment so that you do not get behind. If you experience a loss of income due to COVID-19 restrictions and have trouble paying your bill, contact your utility to discuss payment arrangements to help during this time.

[What if someone in my household is critically ill or relies on electricity service for life support. What can I do to get service back on?](#)

If someone in your home is critically ill and relies on electricity service for life support you should immediately contact your utility to discuss options. If you have a limited income and are receiving services at a hospital or medical facility, you should find out if there is a certified "Navigator" who can assist you with your utility service problem. If none is available, contact the Office of People's Counsel for more information.

[I have trouble making payments on my utility bill. What are my options right now?](#)

There are energy assistance programs available to Maryland residents who face challenges paying their energy bills.

[1\) Apply to the Office of Home Energy Programs \(OHEP\)](#)

Limited-income customers may be eligible for Maryland state energy assistance programs that can help with gas and electric bills. There is one application for all Maryland state energy assistance programs through OHEP.

Who is eligible?

Any Maryland resident who meets income guidelines is eligible to apply for energy assistance through OHEP. The electricity customer must apply for the Electric Universal Service Program (EUSP). A household member may apply for MEAP.

FY 2020 OHEP ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES for MEAP and EUSP		
Household Size	Maximum Monthly Income	Maximum Yearly Income
1	\$1,821	\$21,858
2	\$2,400	\$29,593
3	\$3,030	\$37,328
4	\$4,290	\$45,063
5	\$4,920	\$52,798
6	\$5,550	\$60,533
7	\$5,689	\$68,268
8	\$6,334	\$76,003
For each Additional person, add	\$645	\$7,740

How do I apply?

As the state responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, OHEP will continue to accept applications and process benefit payments. As of March 18, all State local DSS offices are closed, and some local Community Action Agencies (CAAs) may close. In order to limit person-to-person contact, there are several ways that you can apply:

- **Online:** At this time, this is the most reliable option. Apply online at www.mydhrbenefits.dhr.state.md.us
- **Phone:** You may call your local OHEP office to request assistance completing an application over the phone. The list of local offices is here: <http://dhs.maryland.gov/office-of-home-energy-programs/>
- **Mail-in or Drop-off:** If you do not have access to the internet call 800-332-6347 Mon-Fri, 8AM-4:30PM to request an application be mailed to you. You may continue to mail applications to your local office for processing and all OHEP offices will have a secure lockbox to drop-off applications.

You will need to provide copies of certain documents. See the list at <http://dhs.maryland.gov/office-of-home-energy-programs/>.

Processing times and payment disbursement times should not be affected by these temporary changes. To check the status of your application you can go online to www.myohepstatus.org.

2) [Apply to Fuel Fund](#)

The Fuel Fund is a charitable organization that provides financial assistance for utility bills and bulk fuel to those who are eligible.

Who is eligible?

In order to be eligible you must meet the following criteria:

1. You live in the state of Maryland.
2. You have a current, completed application with the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP). If you are a senior (60+) and have not completed your OHEP application, contact the Fuel Fund. They may still be able to help.
3. You meet Fuel Fund's income requirements. The Fuel Fund program is flexible. For special circumstances involving extreme hardship, you may be eligible even if your income is over the limit.
4. You have not received help from the Fuel Fund in the past 12 months.

Household Size	Maximum Monthly Income	Maximum Annual Income
1	\$2,082	\$24,980
2	\$2,818	\$33,820
3	\$3,555	\$42,660
4	\$4,292	\$51,500
5	\$5,028	\$60,340
6	\$5,765	\$69,180
7	\$6,502	\$78,020
8	\$7,238	\$86,860

How do I apply?

There are two ways to apply:

- **Online:** Apply online at www.fuelfundmaryland.org
- **Phone:** If you cannot apply online then you can call 410-235-9080 EX 1 Mon/Wed/Fri, 10AM-12PM.

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Processing times and disbursement times should not be affected by these temporary changes.

3) Dial 2-1-1

2-1-1 is a number you can dial and speak to someone about other resources in your local community that may be able to help you pay your utility bill. 2-1-1 is available 7 days per week, 24 hours per day. You can also speak with someone at 2-1-1 about other issues you may be facing like not having enough food, COVID-19 questions, or help with other bills.

****If you have a past due water bill reach out to your provider to make a payment plan. In accordance with the Executive Order water companies must suspend all terminations and late fees at this time. Some water companies are restoring previously terminated households in light of this emergency situation. Contact the provider directly to discuss the specifics of your account.**

****If your employment was affected by the emergency closures you may be eligible for Unemployment Benefits. To learn more about possible Unemployment Benefits visit www.dllr.state.md.us or call 800-827-4839.**