

FACT SHEET 9
RESTRICTIONS ON SERVICE TERMINATIONS

General Restriction

1. A utility cannot terminate service if it has reason to believe that termination would endanger the health or life of an occupant of the customer's residence.

Catch-22: You must notify the utility of the health and safety issues.
You therefore must **know** you must notify the utility.

Specific Restrictions

1. **Medical:** Serious illness or life-support equipment.
 - The termination must "aggravate" a serious illness or prevent the use of life-support equipment
 - The termination can be delayed for an initial period of 30 days;
 - You must provide the utility a **certification** from a **licensed physician or certified nurse practitioner**;
 - You must notify and provide certification to the utility **before** any termination;
 - When a utility uses a form for the physician to certify a serious illness or the need for life support equipment, it shall use the form provided by the Commission.
 - A utility **shall** accept a certification from a licensed physician, certified nurse practitioner or physician's assistant of a serious illness or need for life support equipment.
 - The customer must make payment arrangements;
 - The certificate is renewable.
 - The certification form is available at www.psc.state.md.us.

NEW: As of October 1, 2019, the OHEP will administer a previously volunteer **Critical Medical Needs Program** to expedite energy assistance and energy efficiency to eligible households with the goal of maintaining or restoring service

2. **Elderly or disabled** customers (or household occupants).
 - Elderly: 65 or older.
 - Disabled: (1) Person has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more life activities, and (2) (a) receives disability payments or (b) has a physician's certificate for a physical disability or a psychiatrist/psychologist's certificate for a mental impairment.
 - The customer must notify and provide a certification to utility **before** any termination.

(more)

- Upon notice that a household has elderly or disabled occupants, the utility must take additional steps to notify customers regarding a termination.
 - Telephone the customer, or
 - Visit the premises and leave a copy of the notice.
 - Utility must document each attempt to make personal contact.

Extreme Weather (Hot and Cold)

1. Gas and electric utilities cannot shut off service during periods of extreme weather.
2. Service shut-offs are prohibited on any day with a forecast at 6 a.m. of 32 degrees or below, or 95 degrees and above, during the next 72-hour period. For gas service, this limit applies in hot weather only if gas is used for cooling, and you have notified the gas company of this use.

Winter Restrictions – Utility Affidavit

1. There is no such thing as a winter moratorium on service terminations in Maryland.
2. There are limits on winter shut-offs, in addition to the extreme weather limitation.
3. The utility cannot terminate service for a bill of gas or electric bill of \$200 or less, or \$300 or less for a combined gas and electric company.
4. The utility must file an **affidavit** with the Public Service Commission:
 - File at least 24 hours before shut-off;
 - Certify that shut-off **will not pose a threat to life or health** of occupants
 - State whether customer claims an occupant is elderly, disabled, seriously ill or dependent upon life support equipment
5. The utility must attempt personal contact **on two separate days** and provide information on energy programs:
 - Telephone; or
 - Visit to premises.