

Office of People's Counsel
www.opc.maryland.gov
DLInfo_OPC@maryland.gov
410-767-8150; 800-207-4055

COVID-19: What Choptank Customers Should Know

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 expired on September 1, 2020. The Public Service Commission made a ruling extending the moratorium until October 1, 2020 to prevent shut-offs and late fee collection for non-payment of electric, gas and private water. Any termination notice sent before October 1, 2020 is invalid.

The utility companies may not send a termination notice until October 1, 2020. The stated turn-off date cannot be before November 15, 2020.

1. I have a pending Choptank Electric service termination notice. Will my gas or electricity be shut-off?

No. Choptank will not terminate your service through November 15, 2020. You should still make every effort to pay your bill. Once the suspension is lifted, you will be responsible for the full amount. You may start receiving turn-off notices October 1, 2020.

OPC strongly recommends that you contact Choptank to try and work out a payment plan. Choptank will be offering 12-month payment plans to everyone and 24-month payment plans to OHEP-certified customers. There is no required down payment or security deposit to enter into a payment plan.

Customers can contact their Member Services Center at 877-892-0001. Let them know of any layoff or reduced income as a result of the State of Emergency.

If you are concerned about your ability to pay your bill, there may be resources to help. Please contact us at DLInfo_OPC@maryland.gov or review our resource guides at www.opc.maryland.gov to learn about different programs that might be able to assist you in getting back on track with your utility bill.

2. If I can't make a payment right now, will I get a late fee added to my bill?

No. Choptank will not impose or collect any newly incurred late fees through October 1, 2020.

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3. What can I do if my gas or electric services are off right now?

Your gas or electric service will not be automatically restored. However, if your services are off right now, OPC recommends that you contact Choptank Electric. Customers can contact their Member Services Center at 877-892-0001.

There may be other resources to help. Please contact us at DLInfo_OPC@maryland.gov or review our resource guides at www.opc.maryland.gov to learn about different programs that might be able to assist you.

4. What if someone in my household is critically ill or relies on Choptank service for life support. What can I do to get service back on?

If someone in your home is critically ill and relies on Choptank service for life support you should immediately contact Choptank to discuss options. There may be options for your household. 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, or contact OPC for more information.

5. What if I need to start or stop my utility service, report an outage, or report an issue?

If you need to access any of Choptank's services, use their online portal at www.choptankelectric.coop or call their Member Services Center at 877-892-0001 for assistance with these services.

6. Can I still make payments on my utility account?

Yes. While there are suspensions on non-payment service terminations, you can still make payments to your account. You can mail, call in to the automated system (866-999-4574), utilize the drop-boxes, or go online to www.choptankelectric.coop if you want to make a payment on your account. Choptank will be closing their lobbies, walk-in offices, and the Denton drive-thru until further notice. OPC recommends that you continue to make payments, even if partial payments, even though your utility services cannot be terminated.

7. I have contacted my utility about working out a payment plan and they have not assisted me. What do I do now?

Remember: Your utility cannot issue a turn off until October 1, 2020. However, you will be subject to a turn-off if you are behind on your bill after November 15, 2020. It is a good idea to be proactive in managing your bill during the emergency. You are entitled to be offered a 12-

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month payment plan and a 24-month payment plan if you are an OHEP-certified customer. There is no requirement to make a down payment or security deposit to enter into a payment plan.

If your utility will not agree to assist you, you can submit a complaint to the Consumer Assistance Division of the Public Service Commission (PSC/CAD). Due to the limitations on public agencies, you will need to submit the complaint online at www.psc.state.md.us. If you are not able to fill out the form online, contact OPC at 410-767-8150 and leave a message with your name and phone # and state the problem, and someone will contact you to assist you.