



## Public Utility Commission of Texas

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# Public Utility Commission of Texas Reminds Public of Consumer Protection Rules

*Electric Bill Assistance Available Amid Summer Heat*

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**Austin, Texas** – The Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) is reminding Texans of electric industry rules that protect consumers from disconnection due to financial difficulties or during extreme heat and require providers to offer bill payment assistance.

“As Texans along the Gulf Coast continue to recover from Hurricane Beryl and summer temperatures hold across the state, it’s important for all consumers to be aware of the rules and financial resources in place to protect them and their electricity service,” PUC Executive Director Connie Corona said.

“Ensuring the power stays on for all Texans, regardless of their financial situation, is a top priority for all of us at the PUC.”

Several utilities impacted by Hurricane Beryl have suspended disconnections to allow consumers more time to recover from the storm. More details on these suspensions are available in [this memo](#).

PUC customer protection rules require retail electric providers (REPs) to offer bill payment assistance programs and to explain the eligibility requirements. Electric cooperatives and municipally owned utilities in Texas are not subject to this rule; however, most offer some form of bill assistance.

A customer who cannot pay a bill in full should contact their REP. If a customer indicates an inability to pay, the REP must inform the customer of all applicable payment options and assistance. Depending on the customer’s payment history, one of the following options may be available:

- A **payment arrangement** is an agreement between the REP and a customer to pay a bill after its due date, but before the next bill. This is sometimes called “an extension.”
- A **deferred payment plan** allows a customer to pay an outstanding balance in installments. The initial payment required cannot be more than half the amount due. The REP must allow the customer at least five bills to pay the remainder. The REP may apply a switch-hold to the customer’s account that will prevent the customer from switching to another REP



until the plan is paid in full. A **deferred payment plan must be made available** for a bill that becomes due **in July, August, or September**.

Investor-owned utilities are required to offer similar payment assistance options to their customers. More information on the requirements for investor-owned utilities is available in Section [25.28\(i\)](#) of the PUCT's rules.

PUCT customer protection rules also prohibit the disconnection of a customer's electricity service for non-payment during extreme weather emergencies, including during extreme heat. The PUCT's definition of an extreme weather emergency follows National Weather Service advisory criteria and is outlined in the rule (Chapter 25, Section [25.483](#) and [25.29j](#)). Additionally, REPs are required to offer deferred payment plans for bills that become due during extreme weather.

The PUCT encourages all consumers who may be experiencing financial challenges related to their energy bill to contact their provider to see what assistance is available or call 211 for information on other programs in their area. Additionally, the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs offers an [online tool](#) for consumers to search for utility bill assistance in their area.

The PUCT has additional protections for consumers who are ill or disabled and have established that any disconnection in service would cause illness or the worsening of an existing illness. For more information on these protections, visit the PUCT's [Know Your Rights](#) webpage.

In addition to these rules and resources, the PUCT's Consumer Protection Division is always available to work with Texans to reconcile issues related to their utility service. Consumers are encouraged to first contact their electric provider to resolve their issue, and if they are unable to reach a resolution, they can contact CPD by emailing [consumer@puc.texas.gov](mailto:consumer@puc.texas.gov) or calling 1-888-782-8477.

The [PUCT's Power to Save](#) website provides energy saving tips and other helpful consumer resources.

### **About the Public Utility Commission of Texas**

Our mission is to serve Texans by regulating the state's electric, telecommunication, and water and sewer utilities, implementing respective legislation, and offering customer assistance in resolving consumer complaints. Since its founding in 1975, the Commission has a long and proud history of service to Texas, protecting customers, fostering competition, and promoting high quality infrastructure. To learn more, please visit <https://www.puc.texas.gov>.