

BENCO ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MINNESOTA COLD WEATHER RULE DISCONNECT NOTICE OF RESIDENTIAL MEMBER RIGHTS



If you are experiencing financial hardship, please contact BENCO as soon as possible to set up payment arrangements.

The Minnesota Cold Weather Rule does not prevent winter disconnects. If you receive a disconnection notice, you must act promptly and contact BENCO.

Please read the Notice of Residential Member Rights before completing the Application for Electric Cooperative Shut-Off Protection.

Notice of Residential Member Rights

The Minnesota Legislature has enacted a Cold Weather Law (Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 216B.097) which provides that from October 1 to April 30, an electric cooperative or municipal utility cannot disconnect a residential member for non-payment if the disconnection would affect your primary heat source for the residential unit and all of the following conditions are met:

- 1. The household income of the consumer is at or below 60 percent of the state median household income. A municipal utility or cooperative electric association utility may (i) verify income on forms it provides or (ii) obtain verification of income from the local energy assistance provider. A consumer is deemed to meet the income requirements of this clause if the consumer receives any form of public assistance, including energy assistance, that uses an income eligibility threshold at or below 50 percent of the state median household income;*
- 2. A consumer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household;*

- 3. A consumer receives referrals to energy assistance weatherization conservation or other programs likely to reduce the consumer's energy bills.*

The purpose of this notice is to inform you of your rights and responsibilities under the Cold Weather Law. These rights and responsibilities are designed to help you with high winter electric bills. You must act **PROMPTLY**. If you choose not to assert your rights or choose not to enter into a mutually acceptable payment schedule, your service may be disconnected.

The Cold Weather Law provides you with these options:

The **RIGHT** to request protection under the Cold Weather Law by applying for shut-off protection. If you do so and your household income is at or below 50% of the state median household income, your service affecting your primary heat source cannot be disconnected for nonpayment of your bill. However, BENCO has the right to accept or reject your request based on information supplied or other supporting documentation.

The **RESPONSIBILITY**, if you choose to apply for shut-off protection, to complete an "Application for Electric Cooperative Shut-Off Protection" form and return it to BENCO within 10 days of the notice to disconnect. You must also contact BENCO to arrange a payment plan.

The **RIGHT** not to be involuntarily disconnected on a Friday, unless you decline to enter into a payment agreement offered that day in person or via personal contact by telephone by a municipal utility or cooperative electric association, on a weekend,

holiday, or the day before a holiday, when utility offices are closed, or after the close of business on a day when disconnection is permitted, unless a field representative of a municipal utility or cooperative electric association who is authorized to enter into a payment agreement, accept payment, and continue service, offers a payment agreement to you.



The **RIGHT** not to be disconnected until at least 30 days after the postmark of the notice to disconnect or until 15 days after the notice and information has been personally delivered.

The **RIGHT** to appeal the disconnection of service to the BENCO Board of Directors. If you choose to appeal, you must deliver or mail a personal letter stating your situation and issues in dispute. You will be notified when the co-op board will review your appeal and you may be present at the review. No disconnection of service will take place during the appeal process.

Energy Assistance providers serving BENCO Electric Cooperative members:

BROWN COUNTY FAMILY SERVICES

*PO BOX 788, New Ulm, MN 56073
507-354-8246*

MINNESOTA VALLEY ACTION COUNCIL

PO BOX 3327, Mankato, MN 56002

Blue Earth County - 507-345-2433

Faribault County - 507-526-5291

LeSueur County - 507-357-4246

Martin County - 507-238-1663

Nicollet County - 507-934-5224

Sibley County - 507-237-2981

Waseca County - 507-835-8240

Watonwan County - 507-375-5748

SEMCAC OF FREEBORN COUNTY

*PO BOX 549, Rushford, MN 55971
800-944-3281*