

BENCO Electric Cooperative Cold Weather Law

Application For Electric Cooperative Shut-Off Protection

READ THE ENCLOSED NOTICE OF RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER RIGHTS AND POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE BEFORE COMPLETING THIS FORM IF YOU CANNOT PAY YOUR ELECTRIC BILL IN FULL AND NEED TO MAKE SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS TO SPREAD OUT YOUR PAYMENTS, Call BENCO Electric Cooperative at Mankato (507) 387-7963 before the due date. You need not send in this form just to make a payment arrangement, simply call.

Declaration

IF YOU CANNOT PAY YOUR ELECTRIC BILL IN FULL AND NEED COLD WEATHER PROTECTION FROM SHUT-OFF, fill out this form and return it to BENCO Electric Cooperative immediately.

Minnesota's electric co-op cold weather law (Minnesota statutes, chapter 216B.097) provides that from October 15 to April 15 an electric co-op cannot disconnect a residential consumer for nonpayment if you meet **all** of the following conditions:

1. The household income of the customer is at or below 50 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 customer is deemed to meet the income requirements of this clause if the customer 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 customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household;** and
3. A customer receives referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills.

If you do not meet all of the above conditions, then you do not qualify for winter shut-off protection. However, you can continue to receive electric service if you call us to make mutually acceptable payment arrangement.

Fill out completely (please print)

Name _____ Account No. _____

Address _____ City _____, MN

Phone – Home _____ Work _____ Cell _____

Total Amount Owing \$ _____ Total Annual Household Income \$ _____

Number of persons in household (including yourself) _____

Source of Income: ("x" all boxes that apply to household income)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment | <input type="checkbox"/> Disability/Social Security/Pension |
| <input type="checkbox"/> AFDC/GA/GA Med. Care | <input type="checkbox"/> SSI/Food Stamps/XSA/Children's Health Plan |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not pay for my own medical expenses |

Please check if any of the following exists in your home:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Emergency | <input type="checkbox"/> Disabled person in residence | <input type="checkbox"/> Elderly person |
|--|---|---|

CALL BENCO ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE WITHIN 14 DAYS AFTER THE POSTMARK ON THIS NOTICE TO VERIFY YOUR STATUS AND TO MAKE ANY NECESSARY PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS. BENCO ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE PHONE NUMBER IS (507) 387-7963 AT MANKATO or TOLL FREE 1-888-792-3626.

I hereby authorize any gas or electric utility that serves us to exchange billing information. I acknowledge that I have received, read and understand the enclosed Notice of Residential Customer Rights. I attest that the above information is true and correct.

Customer Signature _____ Date _____

Request For Third Party Notification

BENCO Electric Cooperative offers all members the opportunity to request that a "third party" be notified if service is subject to disconnection. You have the opportunity to request that a person or organization of your choice be notified should your electric service become subject to disconnection. This may be especially helpful to those who are ill, elderly or live alone. The third party can be a friend, relative, church or community organization.

The member, as well as the designated third party, would be notified of electric service subject to disconnection. The third party could contact BENCO Electric Cooperative and confirm the member's inability to pay and, if desired, arrange a payment schedule.

THE THIRD PARTY WOULD NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR PAYMENT OF THE MEMBER'S BILL

If your personal circumstances require a third party, please complete this form and return it to BENCO Electric Cooperative as soon as possible.

Fill out completely (please print clearly)

Your Name _____

Your Address _____

Your City/State/Zip Code _____

Your Account Number (from your bill) _____

Your Phone Number – Home _____ Work _____ Cell _____

THIRD PARTY:

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip Code _____

Phone Number Home _____ Work _____ Cell _____

Third Party Signature _____

BENCO Electric Cooperative has my permission to provide information to and accept information from the third party listed above.

Your Signature _____

BENCO Electric Cooperative will make every effort to send a copy of the notice of proposed disconnection to the third party specified. We do not assume liability for failure of a third party to receive or act upon the notice. Please complete and return this form to:

BENCO Electric Cooperative
PO Box 8
Mankato MN 56002-0008

Notice of Residential Customer Rights

READ CAREFULLY

The Minnesota Legislature has enacted a Cold weather Law (Minnesota Statutes, chapter 216B.097) which provides that from October 15 through April 15, an electric cooperative or municipal utility cannot disconnect a residential customer for nonpayment if the disconnection would affect your primary heat source for the residential unit and **all** of the following conditions are met:

1. Your household income is at or below 50 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. You are deemed to meet the income requirements of this clause if you receive 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. You enter into and make reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household; and
3. You receive referrals to energy assistance, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce your 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 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 percent of the state median household income, your service affecting your primary heat source cannot be disconnected for nonpayment of your bill. However, BENCO Electric Cooperative 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 Electric Cooperative within 10 days of the notice to disconnect. You must also contact BENCO Electric Cooperative 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 20 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 Electric Cooperative 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

If you need help paying your electric bills, you may qualify for state or federal assistance. For complete qualification and application information, contact the agency serving your location.

Brown County Family Services

PO Box 788
New Ulm MN 56073
(507) 354-8246

Minnesota Valley Action Council

PO Box 3327
Mankato MN 56002-3327
(507) 345-2433 or 345-2434

Minnesota Valley Action Council

1-800-767-7139
Blue Earth County – (507) 345-2433
Faribault County – (507) 526-5291
Le Sueur 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

S.E.M.C.A.C. (Freeborn County)

PO Box 549
Rushford MN 55971
(800) 944-3281