Office of the Ohio
Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

WINTER RECONNECT ORDER

Energy assistance available to reconnect or to avoid disconnection of utilities

Ohio's electric and natural gas customers have the opportunity to use the Winter Reconnect Order (WRO) during the winter heating season from October 17, through April 14, to reconnect or to avoid disconnection of their utilities. The WRO applies only to Ohio's investor-owned electric and natural gas utilities and does not apply to municipally-owned utilities or rural electric co-ops. To apply, contact your utility company.

- The order allows any electric or natural gas customer of an investor-owned utility to avoid disconnection or to reconnect their service for $175, even if the customer owes more and cannot afford to pay the entire balance.
- If reconnection charges apply, customers may also be charged up to $36 at the time of reconnection. If the reconnection fee is greater than $36, the customer may have the balance of the fee applied to the next month's bill.
- Customers owing more than $175 will then need to make payment arrangements with the utility for the rest of their past due amount. For some customers this may include enrolling in Ohio's Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP Plus).
- The WRO can also be used by consumers wishing to establish new service. If charged a security deposit by the natural gas or electric utility company that exceeds $175, customers can pay $175 and be charged the remainder of the deposit on their next month's bill.

No income restrictions

The WRO does not have any income restrictions. If a customer is eligible for the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) which is based on 175% of the federal poverty guidelines, they may be able to use the HEAP Winter Crisis Program to secure the $175 required to maintain or restore their utility service under the WRO rules.

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- Consumers may only use the WRO once during the winter heating season as defined above.
- If both the gas and electric utilities are in disconnect status (disconnected or with a disconnect notice) the customer may use their one-time use of the WRO to apply to both utilities, splitting the $175 between the two.

It is always recommended to speak with a representative of the utility company or your local community action agency before using the WRO to ensure that the utility understands the $175 payment is being used in accordance with the WRO. Otherwise it is possible that the money may be applied to a customer's past due account without receiving the benefit and protection of the WRO.

If a customer is using the HEAP Winter Crisis Program, the community action agency will coordinate with the utility. To find the community action agency in your area, search by county at http://oacaa.org. If a customer is not working through the community action agency and they would like someone to assist them in talking to their utility company, customers can call the PUCO at 1-800-686-7826.

Utility Company Contact Information

American Electric Power
1-800-277-2177

Cleveland Electric Illuminating
1-800-589-3101

Columbia Gas of Ohio
1-800-344-4077

Dayton Power & Light
1-800-433-8500

Dominion East Ohio Gas
1-800-362-7557

Duke Energy Ohio
1-800-544-6900

Ohio Edison
1-800-633-4766

Toledo Edison
1-800-447-3333

Vectren Energy Delivery of Ohio
1-800-227-1376

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at www.occ.ohio.gov.

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