



Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

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UTILITY PROGRAMS FOR MILITARY FAMILIES



There are several things that need to be arranged before leaving and after returning from active military duty. When a family member is deployed it may become a financial hardship. Fortunately, there are programs in Ohio that ensure utilities do not become a hardship. There are also organizations that can provide support and state consumer assistance programs that families may be eligible for.

Utility-sponsored assistance

If you are preparing for deployment, call your utility's customer service hotline and prepare documentation of active duty. Utility companies can work with customers on a case-by-case basis.

American Electric Power (AEP) has an Ohio Deployed Military Policy for active duty personnel preparing for or returning from deployment. This program must be requested by calling **1-800-672-2231**. Program offerings are determined on a case-by-case basis. Eligible customers will be expected to provide proof of deployment and residence.

Veterans, reservists and active duty personnel may also be eligible for AEP's Neighbor to Neighbor assistance program. The program provides grants to eligible customers. The minimum

payment for this program is waived for veterans, active military and senior citizens. All eligible customers should have a minimum account balance of \$50 and be at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. For more information or to donate to the Neighbor to Neighbor fund, call **1-800-672-2231**.

Aqua Ohio does not have a specific program for military families, but customers may contact Aqua at **1-877-987-2782** for information regarding payment arrangements.

Columbia Gas of Ohio will delay collection on the accounts of active duty personnel for 12 months. Upon return from active duty, the customer will have a 12-month payment plan. Customers are eligible for these benefits if they provide documentation of active duty or deployment. Call Columbia for information, **1-800-344-4077**, and send documentation by fax, 614-460-6203, or by mail to Columbia Gas of Ohio, ATTN: Revenue Recovery, P.O. Box 117, Columbus, OH 43216.

Dayton Power and Light does not have a specific program for military families, but customers may contact DP&L at **1-877-468-8243** for information regarding payment arrangements.

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Dominion East Ohio does not have a specific program for military families, but customers may contact Dominion at **1-800-362-7557** for information regarding payment arrangements.

Duke Energy Ohio has a Military Deferred Payment Program available for active duty and deployed personnel for electric and natural gas service. Customers should call **1-800-544-6900** with the account name and number to discuss their payment options. Program offerings are determined on a case-by-case basis and may include extended payment options, payment plans for arrearages or an extension of a disconnection date. Even if customers have chosen an alternative energy supplier, they may still be eligible for program offerings.

FirstEnergy companies offer a deferred payment program to active duty and deployed customers. Call FirstEnergy's subsidiaries: **Ohio Edison (1-800-633-4766)**, **Illuminating Company (1-800-589-3101)** or **Toledo Edison (1-800-447-3333)** for more information. Customers can choose to defer all or some of the balance on their bill while on active duty. After returning home, a payment plan will be arranged for the remaining balance due. Customers that have chosen an energy supplier may not be able to defer their payments and should contact their supplier about deferred payment options.

Veterans, reservists and active duty personnel may also be eligible for FirstEnergy's Community Connections program. This consumer assistance program offers services and upgrades to eligible customers, like appliance replacement or roof repairs. No payment is required for these services. Eligible customers must have a household income at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines.

Vectren Energy Delivery of Ohio will prevent disconnection for nonpayment and offer payment arrangements on a case-by-case basis. Documentation of active duty is required. Contact Vectren at **1-800-227-1376**.

The Patriot Plan

The Patriot Plan prevents electric and natural gas companies from disconnecting service for nonpayment to Ohioans deployed on active duty. After returning from active duty, the Patriot Plan requires utility companies to offer a payment plan to repay arrearages, or accumulated debt, without late fees or interest. The payment plan should be equal to the length of deployment, and customers should contact their utility if financial hardship prevents them from repaying arrearages on time. For more information about the electric and natural gas service benefits of the Patriot Plan, contact the **Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO)** at **1-800-686-7826**. The Plan does not apply to career military customers serving their regular tour of duty.

Operation Homefront

Organizations such as the Operation Homefront offer financial assistance to veterans, reservists and active duty personnel. Eligible customers can receive emergency financial assistance for a variety of needs, including consumer assistance. Needs must be documented; be prepared to show records that your income is not enough to pay current expenses. Apply for assistance at their website, <http://homefront.ohio.gov>, and call **1-614-336-7031** with any questions.

Another resource for veterans is their local County Veterans Service Office. These organizations provide short-term financial assistance, which may include consumer assistance, to veterans and their families. A complete listing of service offices can be found on the Ohio Department of Veterans Services website, www.dvs.ohio.gov.

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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.



The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel is an equal opportunity employer and provider of services.

Ohio ISFAC

The Ohio Inter-Service Family Assistance Committee (ISFAC) organizes resources in support of Ohio troops and their military families. They have six regional committees, RISFACs, to organize resources at the local level, which may include consumer assistance resources. Visit their website, <http://homefront.ohio.gov/AboutUs.aspx>, for more information and to find a Troop and Family Assistance Center or meeting near you.

Energy Assistance Programs

There are assistance programs that are available to all Ohioans, not just those serving or who have served in the military. For complete information, contact the Ohio Development Services Agency. Apply for any of the programs below with the application found on their website. To find eligibility requirements or to learn more about any of their energy assistance programs, call **1-800-282-0880** or visit their website, www.development.ohio.gov.

- ▶ The **Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)** helps Ohioans pay heating bills.
- ▶ The **Summer Crisis Program** helps Ohioans pay their electric bill and/or pay for the purchase of fans or air conditioners.
- ▶ The **Winter Crisis Program** helps Ohioans stay connected to their utilities during the winter after being disconnected or when facing disconnection of electric or natural gas service.
- ▶ **Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP Plus)** offers a payment plan for electric and natural gas bills.
- ▶ The **Home Weatherization Assistance Program (HWAP)** helps Ohioans weatherize their home.

