

Voluntary Moratorium on New Jersey Utility Shut-offs Extended to October 15, 2020

On August 21, 2020, Governor Murphy announced that the voluntary moratorium on utility shut-offs for non-payment of bills was extended to October 15, 2020. The moratorium applies to electric, gas, water, and wastewater utilities regulated by the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU). In March 2020, the utilities initially agreed to the voluntary moratorium.

The state's public utilities are also offering enhanced payment assistance programs for customers who are unable to pay their utility bill on time. Extended Deferred Payment Arrangements (DPAs) of at least 12 months and up to 24 months are available to residential and commercial customers. No down payments are required for these DPAs. In addition, the state has also expanded its energy and rental assistance programs to help residents get through the pandemic. Utility customers can [check here](#) to find out if they are eligible for one of the assistance programs.

Notably, the annual winter moratorium on utility disconnections for non-payment will begin on November 15 and last through March 15. That leaves the possibility for utility disconnections for non-payment to occur between October 15 and November 14, 2020. In that regard, the governor's press release states that "customers may start to receive shutoff notices in September. Should that occur, those customers should contact their utility as soon as possible prior to October 15 to make arrangements to continue their utility service, to explore enrolling in a DPA, and to learn about what other assistance programs might be available. However, no customer will be shut off before October 15."

Note also that the voluntary moratorium does *not* apply to cable or telecommunications companies. Those providers are covered by Governor Murphy's Executive Order 126, which prohibits them from terminating internet and voice service due to non-payment until 30 days after the current public health emergency has ended. On August 27, 2020, the governor issued Executive Order No. 180 extending the Public Health Emergency that was originally declared on March 9, 2020, for an additional 30 days, subject to further extension.



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