



Iowa Utilities Board
Customer Service Fall Meetings
October 2019



Iowa Utilities Board Customer Service Fall Meetings

Your informational packet includes the following items:

- IUB's Presentation
- LIHEAP Energy Assistance (bill insert)
- Basic Family Budgets
- Office of Consumer Advocate Information Sheet
- Telecommunications Programs
- Access Iowa Relay/Relay Iowa
- FCC Lifeline Assistance Form
- IUB Summary of Jurisdiction & Applicable Rules
- Safe at Home Information
- Customer Rights & Responsibilities - Q & A
- IUB Customer Service Contact Cards





The Iowa Utilities Board regulates utilities to ensure that reasonably priced, reliable, environmentally responsible, and safe utility services are available to all Iowans.

Jurisdiction and Regulatory Authority

The Iowa Utilities Board's regulatory jurisdiction can be found in Iowa Code chapters 476 through 479B.

The degree of regulation varies by utility and type of service.

The Office of Consumer Advocate (OCA)

Additional utility regulators:

- Consumer Protection Division (Attorney General's office)
- State Ombudsman



Jurisdiction Generally

Electric: Investor-owned utilities (IOUs) such as IPL/Alliant Energy and MidAmerican Energy

Gas: IOUs MidAmerican, IPL, Black Hills Energy and Liberty Utilities

Telecommunications (Limited): Two-way, landline telecommunications; unauthorized change to a telecommunications customer's account (i.e., slamming and cramming)

Water: IOUs with more than 2,000 customers; only Iowa-American Water Company

Sewer and Wastewater: New law in 2016 for authority over IOUs



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Limited or No Jurisdiction

- Municipal electric utilities, municipal gas utilities and rural electric cooperatives (RECs) are regulated for service only in matters specified by statute (Disconnection along with related payment agreements and Safety).
- No regulation over cellular service or cable television service.
- No regulation of small or municipally owned waterworks.



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Jurisdiction & Regulatory Authority

Issue	Rate-Regulated Utilities	Municipal Utilities	Rural Electric Cooperatives
New Customer	Eoard	Municipal	REC
Budget Billing	Eoard	Municipal	REC
Deposits	Eoard	Municipal	REC
Late Payment Fee	Eoard	Municipal	REC
Disconnection & Safety	Eoard	Eoard	Eoard
Reconnection	Eoard	Municipal	REC



Bill Payment Agreements for Disconnection

- 199 IAC 19.4(11) or 20.4(11)
 - Utility is required to offer a first payment agreement of at least 12 months to a customer unable to pay a delinquent bill.
 - Customer is granted at least one late payment up to four days beyond due date for payment agreement to remain in effect (first agreement only).
 - Customer must have made at least two consecutive full payments under the first payment agreement to qualify for a second payment agreement. The second payment agreement would be the same length as the first, but the utility can require a payment of 1/12 of the balance up front.
 - All payment agreements must include current charges plus payment agreement amount to be considered a full payment.



Chart of Bill Payment Agreements for Disconnection

Customer	Utility	Customer Options
Unpaid past-due bill	Utility mails a 12-day disconnection notice and posts if no payment received (posting is required only during winter moratorium)	Utility must offer 12-month payment agreement (Option to dispute reasonableness)
No payment on first payment agreement	Can proceed with disconnection	No requirement to offer another payment agreement.
2 Consecutive Payments	Offer a second payment agreement	Eligible for new 12-month payment agreement and may be required to pay 1/12 down.
Previous payment agreement paid; customer has a new past-due bill	Utility mails a 12-day disconnection notice and posts if no payment received (posting is required only during winter moratorium)	Utility must offer a new 12-month payment agreement.

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Energy Assistance Programs LIHEAP and Home Weatherization

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a federally funded program designed to help low-income families with the cost of home heating. The LIHEAP program is not designed to pay a household's total energy costs. Eligible households receive partial payment assistance of residential heating costs through a one-time payment made directly to the utility or heating fuel vendor.

LIHEAP applications are accepted November 1 through April 30 on a first-come, first-served basis at your local community action agency (Monday through Friday or during hours posted at your local office).

Households with elderly and/or disabled residents can apply beginning on October 1. <https://humanrights.iowa.gov/dcaa/liheap>



Governor Kim Reynolds
Lt. Governor Adam Gregg
San Wong, Director

IOWA
LOW-INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
FFY 2019 FACTS & FIGURES

- Iowa received \$54.6 million in federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds for FFY 2019.
- 82,644 Iowa households (191,281 individuals) received heating assistance benefits to assist with a portion of their heating costs.
- The average statewide heating assistance benefit was approximately \$458.
- 35.5% of households assisted by LIHEAP have an elderly household member.
- 97.6% of households assisted by the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program are NOT receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).
- 53.9% of households assisted by LIHEAP have a disabled member.
- 20.0% of households assisted by LIHEAP have a child less than 6 years of age.
- 56.2% of LIHEAP households are below 100% of federal poverty guidelines.
- 68.3% heat with natural gas; 22.6% heat with electricity; 8.2% heat with liquid propane gas; 0.3% heat with fuel oil; 0.2% heat with wood/coal/other.
- 67.1% live in single family homes; 32.9.% live in duplexes/apartments/mobile homes.
- Benefits are targeted to vulnerable households with low incomes and high heating costs. Elderly, disabled, families with young children, and working poor (who often don't receive any other form of assistance) are also targeted groups.

Source: Iowa Dept. of Human Rights/D.C.A.A. 515.281.3861

Lucas State Office Building | 321 E. 12th St., Des Moines, IA 50319 | 515-242-5655 | Fax: 515-242-6119 | <https://humanrights.iowa.gov>

Energy Assistance Programs

LIHEAP and Home Weatherization

- **LIHEAP Eligibility** = 175% of [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#)
(November 1, 2019 – April 30, 2020)

INCOME MAXIMUMS

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Annual Gross Income</u>
1	\$21,858
2	\$29,593
3	\$37,328
4	\$45,063
5	\$52,798
6	\$60,533
7	\$68,268
8	\$76,003

For households with more than eight members,
add \$7,735 for each additional member.



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ECIP
 Energy Crisis Intervention Payment
 (included as part of the LIHEAP)

List of “Energy Crisis” Emergencies:

- Non-working heating system (there must be a heating system present)
- Temporary need for alternate shelter
- Disconnected from utility service (can use for deposit)
- Disconnection from utility service imminent (if missing a utility payment under an agreement will cause a disconnect notice to be issued)
- Empty liquid propane (LP) tank
- LP tank less than 20% remaining
- Window air conditioning unit or repair of existing central air unit, when medically necessary



Energy Assistance Programs
LIHEAP and Home Weatherization

- **Weatherization Eligibility** = 200% of [Federal Poverty Guidelines](#)
 (April 1, 2019 – March 31, 2020)

INCOME MAXIMUMS

<u>Household Size</u>	<u>Annual Gross Income</u>
1	\$24,980
2	\$33,820
3	\$42,660
4	\$51,500
5	\$60,340
6	\$69,180
7	\$78,020
8	\$86,860

For households with more than eight members,
 add \$8,840 for each additional member.



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Moratorium

Disconnection of a residential customer shall not take place from November 1 to April 1 if that customer is 1) a head of household and 2) approved for either the low-income home energy assistance program (LIHEAP) or weatherization assistance program.

If a residential customer informs the utility they may qualify for the programs, the utility will allow 30 days from the date the utility is notified to allow the customer time to obtain assistance.



Other Disconnection Items

- Utility must make a diligent attempt to contact the residential customer, by telephone or in person of the pending disconnection and explain the customer's rights and responsibilities.
- From November 1 to April 1, if the utility is unable to speak with the customer to advise them of the disconnect, the utility must post the premises at least one day prior to disconnection.
 - Rental properties
 - Special Health Conditions
 - Cold Weather
 - Deployment



Telecommunication Update

- Local exchange rates were deregulated in 2009
- Service quality of landline telephone service was deregulated in 2017
- Docket No. RMU-2018-0022 addresses those deregulations and other telecommunications components
 - Comment period on the Draft Adopted and Filed closed on October 3, 2019
 - Anticipate adoption and filed to be published in the Iowa Administrative Bulletin on October 23, 2019



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Telecommunication Update

- While this area has been deregulated, the IUB still maintains jurisdiction over certain aspects of this service, including:
 - Wholesale disputes (Interconnection between telecommunication companies)
 - FCC – delegated duties
 - Customer Complaints
 - Dual Party Relay Service (DPRS)
 - Service Issues



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Iowa Telecommunications Programs

- **Relay Iowa**
 - Links people who are hearing, deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech difficulties with one another for communication over the telephone.
- **The Iowa Equipment Distribution Program**
 - Helps individuals pay for specialized telephone equipment that is designed to assist in communicating more effectively over the telephone.
- **Iowa Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program**
- **Lifeline Telephone Assistance Program**
 - National program that provides funding assistance for wireless phones or wireless internet.
 - Monthly bill credit of \$9.25 per qualified household, not per person



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Open Rule-making Dockets

An update to each rule making is available for review by visiting the **IUB website**: <https://iub.iowa.gov/proposed-rules>

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| • RMU-2016-0022 | Chapter 7 | Practice and Procedure |
| • RMU-2016-0004 | Chapter 10 | Restoration of Ag Lands During and After Pipeline Construction |
| • RMU-2016-0035 | Chapter 21 | Water |
| • RMU-2018-0022 | Chapter 22 | Telecommunications |
| • RMU-2016-0018 | Chapter 35 | Energy Efficiency Planning and Cost Review |
| • RMU-2018-0100 | Chapter 20
Rule 20 | Electric Vehicle Charging
Administrative Rules |



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Online Comment Forms

- Customer fills out online comment form for open cases with the Board.
- Staff verifies docket number, uploads into IUB electronic filing system (EFS).
- Customer receives email notification on all filings in that docket.
- Customer may be removed from service by calling or emailing customer service.

<https://iub.iowa.gov/online-services/open-docket-comment-form>



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Verbal Inquiries

- Ask if customer has contacted utility
- Gather necessary customer information and forward to utility for response
- Review utility response, review for rules violation, follow up with customer
- Close verbal inquiry if satisfied; customer has option to file informal written complaint if not satisfied



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General Inquiries (GI)

- Review written complaint for issues and assign GI number
- Email sent to complainant and utility with complaint/ attachments
- Utility has 10 days to respond
- Staff reviews utility response, determines and sends response to complainant
- If not satisfied, an informal complaint can be initiated
- More written complaints assigned as quicker turnaround than C-files



Informal Written Complaints (C files)

- Review written complaint for issues and assign C -File number
- Initial letters sent within 10 days to utility, customer, and OCA
- Utility has 20 days to investigate and respond to all parties
- Staff reviews utility response, determines if investigation is complete. Once completed, staff prepares and sends a proposed resolution to the customer, utility, and OCA.
- If no request for a formal complaint proceeding is made within 14 days after issuance of the resolution, the proposed resolution will be deemed binding on all parties.



Formal Written Complaints (FCU)

- Opened based upon appeal from a proposed resolution or based upon a request from any person or on Board's own initiative.
- Standard for initiating an FCU is if the Board finds the utility's response to the complaint is inadequate and **there appears to be any reasonable ground for investigating the complaint.**
- Board reviews staff's investigation and recommendation.
- Board order is issued granting or denying request.
- If granted, Board issues a procedural schedule or conducts a scheduling conference.



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Iowa One Call

- “Click Before You Dig” or “Call Before You Dig”
- If an underground utility line is hit while digging, it can cause serious injuries, disrupt service to entire neighborhoods, and potentially result in fines and repair costs.
- IUB investigates One Call complaints
- The Office of the Attorney General enforces the One Call Law.

Call 811 or visit IowaOneCall.com



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Safe at Home An Address Confidentiality Program

- Program provides participants with a legal substitute address and mail forwarding service. Purpose is to prevent survivors of domestic violence from being located through public records.
- Agencies are required by law to accept the Safe at Home address as the legal address of the participant. The address is: 899 E 12th St, PO Box 959, Des Moines, IA 50304. (Notices and bills may take an extra 5-7 days to be received by customer.)
- Utilities will need to obtain the actual physical address to set up service. Safe at Home address should be used as mailing address, and the physical address kept private.
- For more information, visit <http://safeathome.iowa.gov> or contact Melanie Shellenberger, Program Administrator at 515-725-SAFE (7233), or SafeAtHome@iowa.gov.



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Scenarios

Person A and Person B move into the household on January 1; the electric utilities are in Person A's name.

Person A fails to pay the utility bill and defaults on the first payment after making 3 successful payments and has a back balance of \$700 on September 1. Person A moves out on September 3. Person B calls the utility company to put service in their name.

What options does the utility have to provide the customer?



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Scenarios

A customer has a delinquent balance of \$2,000 and has defaulted on first and second payment agreements. The utility issues a disconnection notice on November 1 for disconnection on November 7. The customer comes home on November 8 and finds utilities disconnected.

What rights does the customer have?



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Iowa Utilities Board Customer Service Website Information

Iowa Utilities Board Website: <https://iub.iowa.gov>

Scroll under the “**Consumers**” navigation at the top of the home page for various topics:

- How to File a Complaint (regarding utility service)
- How to File a Comment or Objection in a Docket
- Customer Rights & Responsibilities (for natural gas and electric)
- Consumer Informational Brochures
- Lifeline Telephone Assistance Program
- Telephone Programs for Iowans who have Difficulty Hearing
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Staying Safe around Utilities
- Find a Utility Service Provider in your Area
- Tips to Save Energy
- Federal Do Not Call Registry
- Links to Other Consumer information



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Ways to Contact the Board

Telephone: 1-877-565-4450 (Mon-Fri. 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.)

Email: Customer@iub.iowa.gov
iub@iub.iowa.gov

Postal Mail: 1375 E. Court Ave, Des Moines, IA 50319

Fax: 515-725-7399

Online Complaint Form: At iub.iowa.gov under the **Consumers** navigation tab (Complaints about a Utility page) or **records & Information** navigation tab (Forms and Applications page)

- <https://iub.iowa.gov/consumers/complaints-about-utility/online-complaint-form>



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Questions?

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