

216B.098 RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER PROTECTIONS.

Subdivision 1. **Applicability.** The provisions of this section apply to residential customers of public utilities, municipal utilities, and cooperative electric associations. Each municipal utility and cooperative electric association may establish terms and conditions for the plans and agreements required under subdivisions 2 and 3.

Subd. 2. **Budget billing plans.** A utility shall offer a customer a budget billing plan for payment of charges for service, including adequate notice to customers prior to changing budget payment amounts. Municipal utilities having 3,000 or fewer customers are exempt from this requirement. Municipal utilities having more than 3,000 customers shall implement this requirement before July 1, 2003.

Subd. 3. **Payment agreements.** A utility shall offer a payment agreement for the payment of arrears. Payment agreements must consider a customer's financial circumstances and any extenuating circumstances of the household. No additional service deposit may be charged as a consideration to continue service to a customer who has entered and is reasonably on time under an accepted payment agreement.

Subd. 4. **Undercharges.** (a) A utility shall offer a payment agreement to customers who have been undercharged if no culpable conduct by the customer or resident of the customer's household caused the undercharge. The agreement must cover a period equal to the time over which the undercharge occurred or a different time period that is mutually agreeable to the customer and the utility, except that the duration of a payment agreement offered by a utility to a customer whose household income is at or below 50 percent of state median household income must consider the financial circumstances of the customer's household.

(b) No interest or delinquency fee may be charged as part of an undercharge agreement under this subdivision.

(c) If a customer inquiry or complaint results in the utility's discovery of the undercharge, the utility may bill for undercharges incurred after the date of the inquiry or complaint only if the utility began investigating the inquiry or complaint within a reasonable time after when it was made.

Subd. 5. **Medically necessary equipment.** A utility shall reconnect or continue service to a customer's residence where a medical emergency exists or where medical equipment requiring electricity necessary to sustain life is in use, provided that the utility receives from a medical doctor written certification, or initial certification by telephone and written certification within five business days, that failure to reconnect or continue service will impair or threaten the health or safety of a resident of the customer's household. The customer must enter into a payment agreement.

Subd. 6. **Commission authority.** In addition to any other authority, the commission has the authority to resolve customer complaints against a public utility, as defined in section 216B.02, subdivision 4, whether or not the complaint involves a violation of this chapter. The commission may delegate this authority to commission staff as it deems appropriate.

History: 2001 c 212 art 4 s 3; 2002 c 379 art 1 s 54; 2007 c 57 art 2 s 16; 2008 c 162 s 4