

Disconnection of Electrical Service - Policy #12

This policy is consistent with Public Service Board Rule No. 3.300 governing disconnection and reconnection procedures followed by Vermont's electric utilities.

1. DEFINITIONS:

For the purpose of this tariff, the following definitions apply:

- (a) Disconnection: deliberate interruption, limitation or disconnection of utility service to a ratepayer by the serving utility.

- (b) Delinquency: failure of the ratepayer to tender payment for a valid bill or charge: (1) within thirty (30) days of the postmark date of that bill or charge, or (2) by a "due date" at least thirty (30) days after mailing, which shall be printed on the bill and which shall control in the absence of a postmark. Bills for electric energy use shall be rendered by the Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc. on or about the 10th day of each month.

- (c) Notice: as applied to disconnection procedures herein, notice shall mean written notice on a form approved by the Public Service Board, sent within forty (40) days after delinquency and postmarked and sent not more than twenty (20) days, nor less than fourteen (14) days prior to the disconnection of service.

- (d) Physician's Certificate: a written statement by a duly licensed practitioner certifying that a ratepayer or resident within the ratepayer's household, would suffer an immediate and serious health hazard by the disconnection of the company's service to that household. The certificate will be considered "valid" for thirty (30) days or the duration of the hazard, whichever is less, and may be renewed once. Use of a physician's certificate to prevent disconnection or to cause a reconnection is limited to two consecutive 30-day periods and shall not exceed three 30-day

periods in any calendar year, except upon written order of the Public Service Board; or

(e) Payment of a bill: receipt at the Cooperative's business office or authorized payment agency of cash, check or money order which is subsequently honored.

(f) Business Days: Monday through Thursday, excluding legal holidays and any other time, or the day before such time, when the Cooperative's business offices are not open to the public.

(g) Dishonored instrument: a check or other medium of payment tendered to the Cooperative, the payment or acceptance of which is refused by the payor bank and which is subsequently returned unpaid or uncollected to the Cooperative.

2. GENERAL RULE:

The Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc. shall not disconnect service to a ratepayer unless payment of a valid bill or charge is delinquent as defined herein, and notice of disconnection has been provided previously to the ratepayer. The time limits set forth in paragraphs 2 (c) and 2 (f) and 6 of this tariff shall control in the mailing and servicing of disconnect notices.

3. EXCEPTIONS:

The following exceptions shall apply to the general rule of paragraph number 3:

(a) The delinquent bill or charge, or aggregate delinquent bills and charges do not exceed fifty dollars, (\$50.00).

(b) The only charges or bills constituting the delinquency are more than two years old.

(c) The delinquency is due solely to a disputed portion of a charge which has been referred to the Public Service Board by the ratepayer or the Cooperative, and the Board has advised the Cooperative not to disconnect service.

(d) The delinquency is due to a failure to pay a deposit, line extension, special construction charge, or other non-recurring charge except that this exception shall not apply to reconnection charges.

(e) The disconnection would represent an immediate and serious hazard to the health of the ratepayer or a resident within the ratepayer's household, as set forth in a physician's certificate which is on file with the Cooperative. (Notice by telephone or otherwise that such certificate will be forthcoming will have the effect of receipt, providing the certificate is in fact received within (7) days.)

(f) The ratepayer has not been given an opportunity to enter into a reasonable agreement to pay the delinquent bill or, having made such agreement, has substantially abided by its terms, (75% payment of each installment payment as defined by rule 3.300 State of Vermont Public Service Board) and a monthly installment plan for the payment of future bills.

(g) Washington Electric Cooperative shall not disconnect a dwelling at the request of the member/consumer if it has reason to believe the dwelling is rented to other than the member/consumer. At the request of termination of service, WEC shall make note the response to the question of whether the premise is occupied and if the member/consumer is the owner. WEC shall give a three day notice to the occupant of a rental unit if power is to be disconnected due to the failure of the owner to pay a delinquent bill. If power is disconnected by WEC under the presumption that the premise is not occupied, reconnection shall

be made upon notification from the tenant. The tenant will be allowed the waiver of any immediate deposit and will allow payment of any deposit received over a period of 60 days as outlined under deposits.

(h) In addition, during the months of November through March 31, the following conditions will be adhered to:

(1) Prior to disconnection during the winter period, WEC shall confirm that outdoor temperatures, as predicted by a current National Weather Service (phone 862-2475) forecast for the Burlington, Vermont, area, or by another weather service approved by the Public Service Board, will not drop under 10 degrees Fahrenheit during a 48-hour period beginning between 7 a. m. and 10 a. m. on the anticipated date of disconnection. When temperatures are forecast to fall below 10 degrees Fahrenheit during the winter period, WEC is prohibited from performing disconnections.

(2) Utility service to households with any member aged 62 or older shall not be disconnected during the winter period if outdoor temperatures are forecast to fall below 32 degrees Fahrenheit during a 48-hour period beginning between 7 and 10 a. m. on the anticipated date of disconnection, provided that the member/consumer furnishes advance written notice to WEC that the household qualifies under this paragraph. WEC may require reasonable proof of such qualification under this section.

4. DISCONNECTION NOTICE FORM:

The notice form required under paragraph 3 above, and defined in 2(c) above, shall contain the following information:

(a) The ground(s) upon which the proposed disconnection is based;

(b) Statement of intention to disconnect unless the customer either pays the bill, reaches an agreement with the Cooperative

regarding payment of the bill; or makes arrangement for payment of future service based on a budget billing plan if the account is for service at a principal residence, per Policy Bulletin No. 34.

(c) The dates upon which service will be disconnected, if the customer does not take appropriate action;

(d) The name, address and telephone number of the Cooperative's officer or employee to whom the ratepayer may address any inquiry: and the fact that intrastate calls to the Cooperative for this purpose may be made collect;

(e) The ratepayer's right to submit the matter to the Consumer Affairs Division of the Vermont Public Service Board after discussing it with the Cooperative; the Division's address and telephone number; and the fact that intrastate calls to the Division for this purpose may be made collect;

(f) A statement that if disconnection would result in an immediate and serious health hazard to the ratepayer, or resident within the ratepayer's household, disconnection will be postponed upon presentation of a duly licensed physician's certificate;

(g) The itemized cost that will be borne by the ratepayer for disconnection, collection and later restoration of service;

(h) If the immediate household contains any member aged 62 or older and we are furnished with advance written notice that the household qualifies under this section, and if requested, furnishes us with reasonable proof of such qualification, the power will not be disconnected between November 1 and March 31 based on the following: If outdoor temperatures are forecast to fall below 32 degrees Fahrenheit during a 48-hour period beginning at the anticipated time of disconnection.

(i) Any information consistent and in compliance with the above and which has received prior approval from the Public Service Board.

Any ratepayer entering into an agreement to pay a delinquent bill shall be given a notice in writing, containing, in conspicuous language, that failure to substantially comply by the terms of the agreement shall subject the member/consumer to collection/disconnect procedures. Such statement shall also list the possible charges to be incurred because of a termination of service or further collection procedures for failures to abide by these terms.

5. TIME AND NOTICE OF DISCONNECTION:

Disconnection of electric service shall occur only during the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. of the business days specified on the notice of disconnection. If the Cooperative has available personnel authorized to reconnect service and enter into arrangements on behalf of the utility until 8:00 p. m. of a normal business day, the Cooperative may disconnect service between the hours of 8:00 a. m. and 5:00 p. m. on the dates specified on the notice. During the months of November through April, a total of eight (8) collection days will be used. During the months of May through October, a total of four (4) collection days will be used.

When service is disconnected, interrupted or limited at the premises of the ratepayer which shall include disconnection, limitation or interruption at a pole at or near the premises of the ratepayer, the individual making the disconnection shall immediately inform a responsible adult on the premises that service has been disconnected, interrupted, or limited if no responsible adult is then present, shall leave on the premises, in a conspicuous and secure place, a notification advising that service has been disconnected, interrupted or limited and what the ratepayer has to do to have service restored.

6. RESTORATION OF SERVICE:

If service has been disconnected, interrupted or limited, the Cooperative shall, within twenty-four (24) hours, restore service upon the customer's request when the cause for disconnection of service has been removed or when an agreement has been reached between the ratepayer and the Cooperative regarding the dispute which led to the disconnection or when directed to do so by the Public Service Board Restoration of service, to the extent feasible, shall be done so as to avoid charging ratepayers for overtime wages and other abnormal expenses.

7. DISCONNECT AND RECONNECT CHARGES:

A consumer will be assessed a fee of Twenty Dollars (\$20.00) for a personal visit to the consumer's residence pursuant to a disconnect order if:

- (a) Service is disconnected/limited, or
- (b) Payment is made in full; or
- (c) An arrangement is made for payment of the delinquent bill; or
- (d) The customer is not present and the Cooperative's field representative determines from all the facts and circumstances that disconnection is not prudent and he/she takes other, less stringent, action.

If an arrangement is made for payment of the delinquent bill and the customer defaults on the payments agreed to thereunder, after having been given reasonable opportunity to comply, disconnection may take place and the customer shall be assessed Twenty Dollars (\$20.00), for disconnection in addition to the Twenty Dollars (\$20.00) assessed for the personal visit at which the abrogated agreement was reached.

A Twenty Dollar (\$20.00) fee shall be charged for the reconnection of service.

The Twenty Dollar (\$20.00) reconnect fee shall apply during regular working hours, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. When a ratepayer requests that reconnection take place during other than regular working hours, he shall, at the time of the request, be advised that the fees charged for such reconnection are as follows:

(a) Minimum (first hour) at \$35.00;

(b) Subsequent rate per hour, \$10.00;

(c) Mileage charge is portal to portal at the standard mileage rate set by the IRS.

The reconnection must actually be made during other than regular working hours for the higher fees to apply.

Accounts disconnected for non-payment may be charged a deposit based on two months' estimated energy charges (based on 2/12ths of the one year's charge) or in the case of seasonal service, a sum not exceeding one-half of the reasonable estimated charge for the ensuing season.

8. DISHONORED CHECK CHARGE:

The customer will be charged a fee of \$10.00 by the Cooperative for every dishonored check submitted as payment on the customer's account, together with such charges, if any, made by the Cooperative's bank for the return of such dishonored check. A customer whose check is returned for insufficient funds will be notified in writing that their check has been dishonored and the delinquent amount must be paid within five (5) days, or the

customer will be subject to collection/disconnection procedures in accordance with this policy.

A customer whose check is returned for insufficient funds a second time within a twelve (12) month period will be notified in writing that the Cooperative will only accept payment on the customer's account in the form of a money order, cashier or other bank check, or cash for a period of one (1) year from the date of the second notice.

9. INAPPLICABILITY OF TARIFF:

This tariff shall not apply to any disconnections or interruptions of services made necessary for reasons of health, or safety of the ratepayer or the general public.

10. REPORTS TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD:

The Washington Electric Cooperative, Inc. shall file with the Public Service Board on a form to be provided by the Board, a monthly statement showing the number of bills forwarded to ratepayers for that month, the number of disconnection notices sent out to ratepayers, the actual number of disconnections occurring during that month, and the number of reconnections of those disconnected for non-payment of a utility bill.

11. JURISDICTION FOR EXCEPTIONS:

Upon just cause shown, and followed by a written request, the Public Service Board may grant exceptions to these requirements to any ratepayer or to the Cooperative.

12. PROCEDURE:

As set forth above and in Public Service Board Rule No. 3.300.

13. RESPONSIBILITY:

General Manager