



## Electricity Disconnection Rules During Texas' Hot Summers

Between heat, humidity and thunderstorms, Texans are subject to inclement weather on a regular basis during the summer. Below is pertinent information related to electricity disconnection rules during this season of the year.

### **Existing law appropriately establishes when moratoriums on disconnection shall occur**

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The statute provides that a retail electric provider providing service in competitive areas of the state cannot disconnect a customer's electricity for nonpayment in any county for which the National Weather Service (NWS) has issued a Heat Advisory, or when an advisory has been issued on any one of the preceding two calendar days.

Investor-owned utilities in areas of the state outside the Electric Reliability Council of Texas (ERCOT) grid must impose moratoriums on disconnection system-wide during extreme heat when the NWS issues a Heat Advisory for any county in the relevant service territory, or when such an advisory has been issued on any one of the previous two calendar days.

A common NWS guideline for issuing a Heat Advisory is when the Heat Index is expected to exceed 105 degrees Fahrenheit during the day or 80 degrees during the night for at least two consecutive days. The Heat Index is measured based on both heat and humidity to illustrate how hot the temperature "feels."

Furthermore, electric providers may not disconnect service for non-payment when a customer establishes that disconnection of service will cause a person residing at that residence to become ill or more seriously ill.

### **Longer Moratoriums Can Cause Excessive Deferrals**

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Establishing moratoriums on disconnection beyond those already provided for in the statute and Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUC) rules could ultimately serve to harm consumers. A long period in which customers could not be disconnected for non-payment will result in excessively large unpaid electric bills once the moratorium period is over, making it even harder to pay the outstanding debt to the retail provider.

Instead, customers who are having trouble paying their electric bills may express that concern with their electric provider, which must offer deferred payment plans to eligible customers expressing an inability to pay. Electric providers also offer balanced billing plans, which allow eligible customers to pay an average amount each month year-round.

Customers should discuss other electricity product options with their provider to see what products may offer greater savings or price security. A variety of electric products are available in competitive areas of the state.

In addition, community action agencies may be able to help customers with their electric bills or energy efficiency programs. For more information, customers can contact the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA) by calling the agency directly at 1-800-525-0657, dialing the TDHCA's hotline at 2-1-1, or visiting [www.tdhca.state.tx.us/assist\\_energy.htm](http://www.tdhca.state.tx.us/assist_energy.htm).