

Cold Weather Rule takes effect November 1

The Cold Weather Rule, designed to help Kansans who are behind on their utility payments avoid disconnection during the winter months, begins November 1 and remains in effect through March 31.

"The Kansas Corporation Commission encourages Kansans who are past-due on their utility bills and at risk for disconnection to prepare for the colder weather by contacting their utility company to make the necessary payment arrangements," said Commission Chairman Pat Apple.

The Cold Weather Rule, first enacted by the Commission in 1983, prevents or limits utility companies from disconnecting a customer's natural gas or electric service during periods of extreme cold. Utility companies are prohibited from disconnecting a customer's service when temperatures are forecast to be at or below 35 degrees over the next 24 hours. In addition, the rule requires utility companies to offer a 12-month payment plan to allow consumers to maintain or re-establish utility service.

Any residential customer with a past due balance will qualify for payment arrangements under the Rule. However, it is the customer's responsibility to contact the gas or electric company to make those arrangements.

Payment plan conditions to maintain or restore service require that customers agree to pay 1/12th of the total amount owed, 1/12th of the current bill, the full amount of any disconnection or reconnection fee, plus any applicable deposit to the utility. The remaining balance must be paid in equal payments over the next 11 months, in addition to the current monthly bill.

The Cold Weather Rule applies only to residential customers of electric and natural gas utility companies under the KCC's jurisdiction. More information about the Cold Weather Rule may be found at <http://kcc.ks.gov/consumer-information/cold-weather-rule>. Kansans may also contact their local utility company or the KCC's Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection at (800) 662-0027.