Governor Phil Murphy

Governor Murphy Announces Financial Assistance to Protect Residential and Commercial Utility Customers

08/21/2020

Utility Shutoff Moratorium also Extended until October 15th

TRENTON — Governor Phil Murphy today announced that the State's public water, gas, and electric utility companies regulated by BPU have all agreed to extend their voluntary moratorium preventing shutoffs to both residential and commercial customers during the COVID-19 pandemic until October 15th. Additionally, the utilities will offer residential and commercial customers a flexible and extended Deferred Payment Agreement (DPA) of at least 12 months and up to 24 months. No down payments will be required for this assistance.

"Utility services are critical and must continue uninterrupted during this unprecedented time," **said Governor Murphy.** "No one should have to make a decision on whether to put food on the table or pay for basic necessities. With today's announcement, in partnership with our public gas, electric and water utilities, we are continuing our commitment to extend strong financial relief to residents and businesses as they navigate their way toward stability."

"Governor Murphy and I remain committed to helping people stay in their homes with full access to basic utilities as we weather this storm," **said Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver, who serves as Commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs (DCA).** "In addition to this extended moratorium on shutoffs and flexible deferred repayment plans, the State has also responded by expanding our energy and rental assistance programs to help residents get through this crisis. We encourage people to visit: nj.gov/dca/dcaid (https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/t.e2ma.net/click/jk9xkd/nrddit/rqvxqk__;!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!dcoFKW2ZzmWrmdS4dTwHXazGJj1xYcnZAJYUqHyVX2R5VfBVh50-uV7rxBgM2Wv6d5rlN8Iz__c$) to find out if they are eligible for one of our assistance programs."

"This has been an extraordinarily difficult time for New Jerseyans who have been unable to pay their utility bills during the COVID-19 Pandemic," **said NJBPU President Joseph L. Fiordaliso.** "With the cooperation of our state's utilities, we have been able to provide an important helping hand to those who need it. That assistance will continue with payment flexibility and an array of assistance programs to help protect those who are struggling."

"The coronavirus pandemic has had a devastating economic impact on both families and businesses. The last thing anyone needs right now is to have their electricity or water shut off," **said New Jersey Economic Development Authority Chief Executive Officer Tim Sullivan.** "The agreement Governor Murphy announced today is an important relief measure that will shield the most vulnerable families and businesses from the impact of this unprecedented economic crisis and allow us all to devote more time and energy to overcoming COVID-19 and preparing for a strong, equitable recovery."

The utilities have been communicating with customers about available assistance programs, account balances, and payment status. Beginning in September, the utilities will accelerate those outreach efforts.

Customers may start to receive shutoff notices in September. Should that occur, those customers should contact their utility as soon as possible prior to October 15 to make arrangements to continue their utility service, to explore enrolling in a DPA, and to learn about what other assistance programs might be available. However, no customer will be shut off before October 15.

Although utility service shutoffs are still suspended, customers should make payments toward their utility bills if they can. If a customer is struggling to pay, they should ask their utility company about assistance programs and payment plans, and they can also check NJBPU's "Assistance Programs" page (https://www.nj.gov/bpu/assistance/programs/) for information about State programs that are available to eligible customers.

Today's announcement does not apply to cable and telecommunications companies. Those providers are covered by Governor Murphy's Executive Order 126 (https://nj.gov/infobank/eo/056murphy/pdf/EO-126.pdf) that prohibits these companies from terminating Internet and voice service due to non-payment until 30 days after the current public health emergency has ended.

NJBPU reminds and encourages all utility customers and ratepayers who have questions about their service to first contact their utility. A list of public gas and electricity utility company phone numbers is available here (http://ready.nj.gov/plan-prepare/public-utilities.shtml). If a ratepayer is unable to resolve an issue with their utility company, residents should contact NJBPU's Customer Assistance team by filling out this online form (https://www.state.nj.us/bpu/assistance/complaints/inquiry.html), or by calling (800) 624-0241 and leaving a voicemail.

Governor Phil Murphy

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