MINNESOTA
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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News

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Commission Requires Regulated Utilities to Continue Consumer Protections

June 18, 2020 | Will Seuffert | Press Release

St. Paul, Minnesota — The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) voted today to require rate regulated utilities to extend consumer protections throughout the peacetime emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission extended protections that regulated utilities had voluntarily agreed to previously. The unanimous decision was supported by consumer advocates, and includes suspending disconnections, suspending negative credit reporting, and waiving reconnection fees, late fees, interest, and other penalties incurred during the pandemic. The utilities will file a transition plan, after the conclusion of the peacetime emergency, before resuming the previously mentioned activities.

“The COVID-19 pandemic is putting financial pressure on people across the state,” said Commission Chair Katie Sieben. “Extending these protections ensures many Minnesotans can keep their lights on and homes cool during the hot summer months. I appreciate the utilities’ willingness to implement these protections to ensure natural gas and electric services continue to serve Minnesotans during the pandemic.”

Commission members emphasized throughout the hearing that Minnesotans who are experiencing financial stresses should reach out to their utilities to set up payment plans. Although disconnections are suspended and late fees are not allowed, consumers will still accrue bills that will need to be paid at the conclusion of the pandemic. Payment plans should help ease consumer’s monthly payment burden, and allow those who have growing balances to start reducing debt.

Minnesotans needing more information, help with their utility service provider, or assistance setting up a payment plan, can contact the Public Utilities Commission's Consumer Affairs Office for assistance at consumer.puc@state.mn.us (mailto:consumer.puc@state.mn.us); or 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782. Additionally, the state Department of Commerce administers the Energy Assistance Program; more information is available at the Commerce Department's Energy Assistance Program webpage: mn.gov/commerce/eap.jsp (https://mn.gov/commerce/eap.jsp)

About

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission regulates three cornerstone service industries in Minnesota's economy; electricity, natural gas and telephone. The Commission's mission is to create and maintain a regulatory environment that ensures safe, adequate and efficient utility services at fair, reasonable rates consistent with State telecommunications and energy policies. It does so by providing independent, consistent, professional and comprehensive oversight and regulation of utility service providers. Learn more at mn.gov/puc (https://mn.gov/puc/)

Please contact Will Seuffert, 651-201-2217 or will.seuffert@state.mn.us (mailto:will.seuffert@state.mn.us) if you have any questions.

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