

Frequently Asked Questions – Ban on Disconnection of Homes this Winter for Customers of Electricity Distributors

Introduction

Once again, licensed electricity distributors are banned from disconnecting residential customers for non-payment during the winter. The ban is a result of a Decision and Order the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) issued on November 2, 2017.

Customers should note that they are responsible to pay their bill on time. We know that this can be a struggle for some.

If a customer is unable to pay a bill, the single most important thing to do is to stay in contact with the utility. And, to avoid a big bill at the end of the disconnection ban, customers should set up a payment plan with their utility and find out if they qualify for financial assistance as soon as possible.

A number of special programs are available in Ontario to help low-income energy consumers. Learn more at oeb.ca/BillHelp

Here are some Frequently Asked Questions about the ban:

What does this mean for customers?

Electricity distributors are banned from disconnecting or threatening to disconnect residential customers for non-payment from November 15 to April 30 every year, and homes currently disconnected due to non-payment are required to be reconnected without charge.

The OEB has also banned the use of load control devices on homes during the same period and required electricity distributors to remove existing devices on homes, again without charge.

Electricity distributors are also not allowed to ask residential customers to pay account collection fees during the disconnection ban. If you have past due amounts on your bill the distributor may continue to charge late payment fees on these amounts.

What is a load control device?

It is a device that limits how much power – or when power – goes to a home. Some electricity distributors use load control devices as an alternative to disconnection.

Customers who wish to keep an existing load control device or have one installed may still ask their distributor if this service is available.

Does the OEB's Order mean customers will now be reconnected?

Electricity distributors must reconnect residential customers by November 15 if they were disconnected for non-payment.

Reconnection times will vary by distributor according to their size and individual circumstances, and at all times safety requirements will need to be respected.

If a residential customer is currently disconnected they should contact their electricity distributor. If they are unable to resolve the issue with their distributor, they should contact us directly at 1-877-632-2727.

Other measures include the prompt removal of load control devices that have been installed on homes as an alternative to disconnection by November 15, and a prohibition on the installation of new devices during the disconnection ban.

Will those who are reconnected have to pay a fee?

Electricity distributors cannot charge a residential customer for being reconnected or if they were disconnected, or returned to full service if they had a load control device installed, for non-payment.

Does the disconnection ban apply to customers that have a contract with an energy retailer?

The Licence Conditions apply to all residential customers that are served by a licensed electricity distributor, even if they have a contract with an energy retailer.

The OEB is reviewing its customer service rules. How might proposed changes impact disconnections?

The OEB is monitoring the disconnection ban to assess its effectiveness and determine if any changes are needed.

The OEB is currently reviewing feedback on the proposed changes to the customer service rules. You can read the OEB's report on proposed changes to the rules [here](#).

Does the winter disconnection ban apply to other energy service providers?

Natural gas distributors currently have voluntary winter disconnection policies, and natural gas customers should contact their utility to ask about the policies that apply to them. As part of its customer service rules review now underway, the OEB has proposed that the winter disconnection ban also apply to natural gas distributors in the future.

The Order does not apply to residential electricity customers served by a unit sub-meter provider.