

Dakota County Financial Empowerment Checklist to Avoid Utility Disconnection

Cold Weather Protection starts October 15th and ends April 15th each year. The Cold Weather Rule does **not** prohibit disconnect. Your heat can be shut off in the winter if you don't **make & keep** your payment plan with your utility provider. The following steps may help you avoid disconnection. You can use the **back page** to keep track of phone calls you make.

- Apply for ENERGY ASSISTANCE with the CAP Agency:**
 - [Energy Assistance forms and applications](#) are available on line or by calling: 651-322-3500. Applications are accepted from October 1st through May 31st or until funding runs out. Ask about weatherization/conservation programs at the time of your application.
- Contact your service provider to make a payment arrangement:**
 - Even small monthly payments can help keep you connected. DO NOT enter into a payment arrangement you know you cannot afford. Your services will be disconnected if you miss a payment while in a plan. You don't have to take the first offer, you can negotiate. Utility providers must consider your finances when establishing arrangements. [The Minnesota Attorney General's Office has more information.](#)
- If you have received even \$1.00 of help from the CAP Agency you might be eligible for other programs:**
 - CenterPoint and Xcel customers can call the Energy CENTS Coalition at 651-774-9010 or visit www.energycents.org to find out if you might be eligible for help with affordability programs.
 - Salvation Army [HeatShare](#) serving Dakota County can be reached by calling 952-898-9367.
- If you expect a return and have not filed your taxes yet, look for free help with filing:**
 - All the latest information on free tax preparation is available on the [Taxes](#) page of Dakota County's Personal Finance website or by calling 651-554-5763.
- Conserve Energy:**
 - Cutting back on your usage will save you money and keep your bills lower. Call your utility provider for information about how to conserve energy in your home.
 - Dakota County CDA administers [Weatherization & Energy Efficiency Programs](#) to Energy Assistance recipients and other income qualified homeowners.
- If you feel you are being wrongly billed for your utility bills or are being pushed into a payment arrangement that is beyond your ability to pay:**
 - Contact the Public Utilities Commission for help [online](#) or by calling 651-296-3353
- Using a household spending plan (budget) will help you save and stretch your dollars:**
 - You are eligible for free [Financial Counseling](#) from an accredited provider. Call 651-554-5763 for an appointment.
- If you have tried everything & are still worried about a shut-off:** Emergency Assistance & Financial Counseling programs are available throughout Dakota County: Contact your current Financial Worker, [Public Assistance](#), or [Financial Empowerment Services](#) for more information.

Pro Tip: Keep track of your contacts with your utility providers.

Name of Provider: Date/Time of Call

Reason for Call

Name of person you are speaking with:

Call Summary

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