



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION  
P.O. BOX 3265, HARRISBURG, PA 17105-3265

IN REPLY PLEASE  
REFER TO OUR FILE

The following definitions apply when considering Customer Service and Billing Practices:

*Account Balance:* The amount of current service which has been properly billed in addition to any accrued arrearages.

*Delinquent Account:* Charges for utility service that have not been paid in full by the due date stated on the bill or otherwise agreed upon; provided that the account may not be deemed delinquent if: prior to the due date, a payment or settlement agreement with the utility has been entered into by the ratepayer, a timely filed notice of dispute is pending before the utility, or, an informal or formal complaint is timely filed with and is pending before the Commission.

*Discontinuance of Service:* The cessation of service with the consent of the ratepayer.

*Payment Agreement:* A mutually satisfactory written agreement whereby a ratepayer or applicant who admits liability for billed service is permitted to amortize or pay the unpaid balance of the account in one or more payments over a reasonable period of time.

*Reasonable Period of Time:* The utility, through its employees, shall exercise good faith and fair judgment in attempting to enter a reasonable settlement or payment agreement or otherwise equitably to resolve the matter. Factors to be taken into account when attempting to enter into a reasonable settlement or payment agreement include the size of the unpaid balance, the ability of the ratepayer to pay, the payment history of the ratepayer and the length of time over which the bill accumulated.

*Termination of Service:* Cessation of service, whether temporary or permanent, without the consent of the ratepayer.

*Unauthorized use of utility service:* Unreasonable interference or diversion of service, including meter tampering (any act which affects the proper registration of service through a meter), by-passing (unmetered service that flows through a device connected between a service line and customer-owned facilities), and unauthorized service restoral.

**PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**  
**Bureau of Consumer Services / Chapter 56 Information Sheet**

**Standard Residential Service Termination Procedures**  
**(52 PA Code §56.91-.99)**

Chapter 56 of the Commission's regulations explains termination of service procedures for nonpayment of residential bills. The following is an outline of those procedures for standard residential service accounts:

**1. Ten (10) Days Prior to Service Termination**

Mail or deliver a written notice to the customer at least ten (10) days prior to the proposed date of termination (§56.91). (see Attachment A)

**2. Three (3) Days Prior to Service Termination**

Attempt to make personal contact, by telephone on two separate days at two different times of day or one time in person, at least three (3) days prior to the proposed termination date (§56.93). (see Attachment B)

**3. Day of Service Termination**

- a. Make personal contact on the date of termination with a responsible adult. If personal contact is made, the company may terminate service.
- b. If no personal contact is made, the company must leave another notice and wait forty-eight (48) hours before terminating service. After forty-eight (48) hours service termination is permitted (§56.94). (see Attachment C).
- c. When service is terminated, a post termination notice must be left at the affected dwelling (§56.95) (see Attachment D).

Other issues to remember are:

1. Terminations are prohibited on Friday, Saturday, Sunday, a bank holiday, a Commission holiday, or any day preceding a holiday described above (§56.82).
2. Companies must comply with the medical emergency provisions (§56.111-.118).
3. If the customer contacts the company to dispute either the bill or the specific reason for termination, the company is to make a diligent attempt to settle the dispute. The company is to explain its position if they cannot reach a mutually satisfactory conclusion.
4. In all cases, the customer has ten (10) days to appeal the company's decision to the Commission. The company must inform the customer of this right. This is called an appeal period and the company cannot take any action to terminate until after the appeal period. Chapter 56.141 - .181 further outlines the requirements for handling disputes.

Please read Subchapter F of Chapter 56 for further details on the termination process.

The following four pages are samples of the termination notices to be used in this process. The Bureau suggests that companies use similar formats.

That pursuant to 52 Pa. Code §1.96, this informal opinion is provided solely as an aid to you. It is not binding upon the Commonwealth or the Commission. Informal opinions are subject to withdrawal or change at any time to conform to new or different interpretations the law.

Attachment A

Date, 2009  
Date Notice Issued

**10-DAY SHUT OFF NOTICE**

Your bill for **\$XXX.xx** is overdue. Because your bill is overdue, we will shut off natural gas service to **Service address** on or after **Time a.m./p.m.** on **Date, 2009**.

To stop the shut off, you must do one (1) of the following at once:

1. Pay the total amount overdue.
2. Call **Company phone number** or visit **Company address** to make a payment, to let us know that you made a payment; or to dispute the overdue bill.
4. Call **Company phone number** if you or someone in your home has a serious illness or a medical condition. Read the Medical Emergency Notice shown below.

**MEDICAL EMERGENCY NOTICE**

If someone living in your home is seriously ill, we will turn your natural gas service back on during this illness if you do two (2) things:

1. Have a doctor certify by phone or in writing to the Company that the illness exists and that the person will be in danger if you do not have natural gas service.

**AND**

2. Make arrangements to pay your overdue and current bills by calling the **Company Name at Company phone number**.

If we shut off your natural gas service, you may have to pay the following charges to have your natural gas service turned back on.

Overdue Amount	<b>\$XXX.xx</b>
Turn-on Charge	<b>\$ XX.xx</b>
Security Deposit	\$ _____
Total Amount Due	<b><u>XXX.xx</u></b>

If you have questions or need more information, please call us. If you are not satisfied after you talk to us, you may file a complaint with the Public Utility Commission by calling (800)-692-7380 toll free, or by writing to P. O. Box 3265, Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265. The Public Utility Commission will delay the shut off if you file the complaint before the shut off date.

**Attachment B**

**Date, 2009**  
Date Notice Issued

**3-DAY SHUT OFF NOTICE**

Your bill for **\$XXX.xx** is overdue. Because your bill is overdue, we will shut off natural gas service to **Service address** or after **Time** a.m./p.m. on **Date, 2009**.

To stop the shut off, you must do one (1) of the following at once:

1. Pay the total amount overdue.
2. Call **Company phone number** or visit **Company address** to make a payment, to let us know that you made a payment; or to dispute the overdue bill.
3. Call **Company phone number** if you or someone in your home has a serious illness or a medical condition. Read the Medical Emergency Notice shown below.

**MEDICAL EMERGENCY NOTICE**

If someone living in your home is seriously ill, we will turn your natural gas service back on during this illness if you do two (2) things:

1. Have a doctor certify by phone or in writing to the Company that the illness exists and that the person will be in danger if you do not have natural gas service.

**AND**

2. Make arrangements to pay your overdue and current bills by calling **Company name at Company phone number**.

If we shut off your natural gas service, you may have to pay the following charges to have your natural gas service turned back on.

Overdue Amount	<b>\$XXX.xx</b>
Turn-on Charge	<b>\$ XX.xx</b>
Security Deposit	<b>\$_____</b>
Total Amount Due	<b><u>XXX.xx</u></b>

If you have questions or need more information, please call us. If you are not satisfied after you talk to us, you may file a complaint with the Public Utility Commission by calling (800)-692-7380 toll free, or by writing to P. O. Box 3265, Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265. The Public Utility Commission will delay the shut off if you file the complaint before the shut off date.

Attachment C

Date, 2009  
Date Notice Issued

**48-HOUR SHUT OFF NOTICE**

Your bill for **\$XXX.xx** is overdue. Because your bill is overdue, we will shut off natural gas service to **Service address** on or after **Time a.m./p.m.** on **Date, 2009**

To stop the shut off, you must do one (1) of the following at once:

1. Pay the total amount overdue.
2. Call **Company phone number** or visit **Company address** to make a payment, to let us know that you made a payment; or to dispute the overdue bill.
3. Call **Company phone number** if you or someone in your home has a serious illness or a medical condition. Read the Medical Emergency Notice shown below.

**MEDICAL EMERGENCY NOTICE**

If someone living in your home is seriously ill, we will turn your natural gas service back on during this illness if you do two (2) things:

1. Have a doctor certify by phone or in writing to the Company that the illness exists and that the person will be in danger if you do not have natural gas service.

**AND**

2. Make arrangements to pay your overdue and current bills by calling **Company name at Company phone number.**

If we shut off your natural gas service, you may have to pay the following charges to have your natural gas service turned back on.

Overdue Amount	<b>\$XXX.xx</b>
Turn-on Charge	<b>\$ XX.xx</b>
Security Deposit	_____
Total Amount Due	<b><u>XXX.xx</u></b>

If you have questions or need more information, please call us. If you are not satisfied after you talk to us, you may file a complaint with the Public Utility Commission by calling (800)-692-7380 toll free, or by writing to P. O. Box 3265, Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265. The Public Utility Commission will delay the shut off if you file the complaint before the shut off date.

**Attachment D**

**NOTICE AFTER NATURAL GAS SERVICE IS SHUT OFF**

Because you did not pay your overdue bill, we shut off natural gas service to **Service address** on **Date, 2009 at Time a.m./p.m.**

To have your natural gas service turned on, you must do **all** of the following:

- 1) Call **Company phone number** or visit **Company address** to make arrangements to pay the unpaid balance of **\$XXX.xx**;
- 2) Pay a turn-on fee of **\$ XX.xx**;
- 3) Pay a security deposit (if required).

**MEDICAL EMERGENCY NOTICE**

If someone living in your home is seriously ill, we will turn your natural gas service back on during this illness if you do two (2) things:

1. Have a doctor certify by phone or in writing to the Company that the illness exists and that the person will be in danger if you do not have natural gas service.

**AND**

2. Make arrangements to pay your overdue and current bills by calling **Company name at Company phone number.**