

# Assistance Agencies

**Aiken/Barnwell Counties Community Action Commission**  
803-648-6836

**Beaufort/Jasper Economic Opportunity Commission**  
843-255-7220

**Carolina Community Actions, Inc.**  
803-329-5195

**Charleston County Human Services Commission**  
843-723-9285

**Chesterfield/Marlboro Economic Council**  
843-320-9760

**Darlington County Community Action Agency**  
843-332-1135

**GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission**  
864-223-8434

**Lowcountry Community Action Agency**  
843-549-5576

**OCAB Community Action Agency**  
803-536-1027

**Pee Dee Community Action Partnership**  
843-678-3400

**Piedmont Community Actions, Inc.**  
864-585-8183

**Sunbelt Human Advancement Resources, Inc.**  
864-269-0700

**Waccamaw Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.**  
843-234-4100

**Wateree Community Actions, Inc.**  
803-775-4354

Call 2-1-1 any time 24-hours a day to reach the United Way, which has a great list of resources in many communities.

## About the ORS

The ORS represents the public interest of South Carolina in utility regulation with regard to rates, charges, service standards, facilities, and practices of the major utility industries— electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water/wastewater, and transportation — before the Public Service Commission (PSC), the court system, the SC General Assembly, and federal regulatory bodies.

In fulfilling this mission, the ORS strives to balance the concerns of the using and consuming public, the financial integrity of public utilities, and economic development in South Carolina.

### The ORS Can Help

If you have spoken with your power company and feel you still need help, the Consumer Services Division of the Office of Regulatory Staff can help by contacting the utility on your behalf to ensure that the utility has followed all applicable regulations and by directing you to social services agencies that may have available funds to assist with energy costs.

Phone: 803-737-5230 (Columbia, SC)  
1-800-922-1531 (toll-free in SC)  
803-737-5175 TTY (Columbia, SC)  
1-800-334-2217 TTY (toll-free in SC)  
Fax: 803-737-4750

Web: [www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov](http://www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov)

Hours: 8:30am— 5:00pm  
Monday— Friday  
Messages can be left on 24-hour  
Consumer Services hotline  
(closed state holidays)



# Electric & Natural Gas Safety Net

Information for Consumers  
Presented by the ORS



# Getting Behind on Your Bill?

Electric and natural gas utilities offer safety net programs for consumers. They are:

- Deferred Payment Plan (DPP)
- Medical Certificate
- Third-Party Notification
- Special Needs Customers (SNC)
- Disconnection Temperature Rule
- 10-Day and 3-Day Written Notice of Termination

## **Deferred Payment Plan (DPP)**

In a DPP, the utility company may divide the past due balance into a maximum of 6 monthly payments.

- The consumer must continue to pay current billed charges.
- If the consumer does not keep up with the payment arrangement, the utility may disconnect service after sending written notice.

## **Medical Certificate**

A medical certificate prevents disconnection of electric and/or natural gas service from December through March for eligible residential consumers.

- A certificate must be completed by the consumer and the consumer's licensed health care provider.
  - The health care provider certifies that the consumer received a medical exam and that disconnection of electric and natural gas service would be dangerous to the consumer's health because of a medical condition.
- By completing the form, the consumer certifies he/she is unable to pay in full or by installment payments.

# Make sure you know your rights with regulated utilities.

- The Medical Certificate does not mean the consumer no longer has to pay his/her bill. Upon expiration of the Medical Certificate or through the end of March — whichever comes first — service may be disconnected if payment is not made.

## **Third-Party Notification**

Consumers may name a third party to receive a copy of a disconnection notice for their account in the event electric or natural gas service is scheduled to be disconnected.

- To designate a third party, the utility needs the following information for that person:
  - Name
  - Address
  - Telephone number

## **Special-Needs Customers (SNC)**

New consumers are told about SNC registration by the utility company.

- Special-Needs Customers are:
  - 65 years of age or older, or
  - Disabled, or
  - Chronically ill, or
  - Seriously ill, or
  - On life support as noted by a Medical Certificate
- Consumers who meet the criteria for special needs should register with their electric or natural gas utility.
- If requested, the utility will provide:
  - SNC registration form
  - Medical Certificate form

## **10-Day and 3-Day Written Termination Notice**

These notices are sent to the consumer when disconnection of service is scheduled. The notification process is as follows:

1. Not less than 10 days before disconnect is scheduled, a company must send written notice to the consumer and any designated third party informing the consumer that payment is due or the consumer will be disconnected.
2. If no payment is received or no payment arrangement is made during that 10-day period, a 3-day written final notice is sent to the consumer and any designated third party.

If the consumer facing disconnection is registered as a Special-Needs Customer:

1. Before disconnection, the disconnection crew will make contact with the consumer or responsible party at the residence.
2. Disconnection will be suspended if the SNC or responsible party tells the disconnection crew about a serious health condition or asks for a payment extension.
3. The disconnection crew will advise the utility of the suspension.
4. The utility will follow its internal special-needs review before disconnecting service.

## **Disconnection Temperature Rule**

During the heating and cooling seasons, service for consumers will not be disconnected if temperatures fall within a certain range.

- Heating season: December 1 — March 31
- Cooling season: June 1 — August 31
- Disconnection is suspended when:
  - Average forecasted temperature is 32 degrees Fahrenheit or below for a 48-hour period
  - Forecasted heat index is 105 degrees Fahrenheit or more for a 24-hour period