

RCW 35.21.302 Utility services—Involuntary termination of service during heat-related alerts prohibited—Reconnection and repayment plan—Report. (1) A city or town, including a code city, that owns or operates an electric or water utility may not effect, due to lack of payment, an involuntary termination of utility service to any residential user, including tenants of metered apartment buildings and residents of mobile homes, on any day for which the national weather service has issued or has announced that it intends to issue a heat-related alert, such as an excessive heat warning, a heat advisory, an excessive heat watch, or a similar alert, for the area in which the residential user's address is located.

(2) (a) A residential user at whose dwelling utility service has been disconnected for lack of payment may request that the utility reconnect service on any day for which the national weather service has issued or has announced that it intends to issue a heat-related alert, such as an excessive heat warning, a heat advisory, an excessive heat watch, or a similar alert, for the area in which the residential user's address is located. The utility shall inform all customers in the notice of disconnection of the ability to seek reconnection and provide clear and specific information on how to make that request, including how to contact the utility.

(b) Upon receipt of a request made pursuant to (a) of this subsection, the utility shall promptly make a reasonable attempt to reconnect service to the dwelling. The utility, in connection with a request made pursuant to (a) of this subsection, may require the residential user to enter into a payment plan prior to reconnecting service to the dwelling. If the utility requires the residential user to enter into a repayment plan, the repayment plan must comply with subsection (3) of this section.

(3) A repayment plan required by a utility pursuant to subsection (2) (b) of this section will be designed both to pay the past due bill by the following May 15th, or as soon as possible after May 15th if needed to maintain monthly payments that are no greater than six percent of the customer's monthly income, and to pay for continued utility service. The plan may not require monthly payments in excess of six percent of the customer's monthly income. A customer may agree to pay a higher percentage during this period, but will not be in default unless payment during this period is less than six percent of the customer's monthly income. If assistance payments are received by the customer subsequent to implementation of the plan, the customer shall contact the utility to reformulate the plan.

(4) On an annual basis, each city or town, including a code city, that owns or operates an electric or water utility with more than 25,000 retail electric customers or 2,500 water customers in Washington must submit a report to the department of commerce that includes the total number of disconnections that occurred on each day for which the national weather service issued, or announced that it intended to issue, a heat-related alert. Utilities with fewer than 25,000 retail electric customers or 2,500 water customers in Washington must provide similar information upon request by the department.

(a) Subject to availability, each utility must provide any other information related to utility disconnections that is requested by the department.

(b) The information required in this subsection must be submitted in a form, timeline, and manner as prescribed by the department.
[2023 c 105 § 3.]