

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU MEET THE COLD WEATHER LAW CONDITIONS:

If you meet all the conditions of the Cold Weather Law as outlined in this brochure, can't pay your electric bill and need cold weather protection from utility shutoff, fill out the Cold Weather Disconnect Protection Form on the back of this brochure and return it to Tri-County Electric Cooperative **immediately along with your income documentation**. The following is a list of energy assistance providers serving Tri-County Electric Cooperative:

- **SEMCAC:** 1-800-944-3281
- **Fillmore County Social Services:** 1-507-765-2175
- **Houston County Social Services:** 1-507-725-5811
- **Winona County Human Services:** 1-507-457-6200
- **NE Iowa Community Action Corp.:**  
1-563-382-9608

## WHAT TO DO IF YOU DON'T MEET THE COLD WEATHER LAW CONDITIONS:

If you do not meet all the conditions of the Cold Weather Law as outlined in this brochure, you do not qualify for winter shutoff protection. However, you still can continue to receive electric service if you call us to set up a mutually acceptable payment arrangement. Call Tri-County Electric at 1-800-432-2285 **BEFORE** the due date.

## LOW COST/NO COST ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIPS

- Caulk and weather strip cracks around doors and window frames. Block openings at bottom of doors to prevent drafts.
- Lower the setting on your thermostat at night and dress warmly.
- Lower the setting on your water heater to 120 degrees F (normal/medium).
- Run dishwasher only when it is full.
- Open shades during winter days to let the warm sunlight in and close the shades at night.
- Wash clothes with warm water and rinse them in cold water.
- Leaking faucets should be repaired promptly, especially hot water.
- Turn off all unused lights and appliances.
- Close all windows tightly and use locks to prevent cold air leaking in. Cover all windows with plastic.
- Broken windows should be repaired immediately and close all storm windows.
- Window air conditioning units should be covered or removed during the heating season.
- Furnace filters should be kept clean.
- Furnaces should be checked for safe and efficient operation at least once a year.
- Vacuum refrigerator and freezer coils every six months to improve efficiency.
- Close off unused rooms.



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING WINTER HEATING BILLS

# MINNESOTA COLD WEATHER LAW

The Cold Weather Law does not totally forbid winter cutoffs. If you receive a disconnection notice this winter, you must act **promptly**.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

31110 Cooperative Way, P.O. Box 626  
Rushford, MN 55971

Business Hours  
7:30 a.m. - 4 p.m. Monday - Friday  
507-864-7783 • 1-800-432-2285

Read the notice of residential customer rights and possible assistance at right BEFORE completing this form.

## COLD WEATHER DISCONNECT PROTECTION FORM

Fill out completely - (please print)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: Home \_\_\_\_\_ Work \_\_\_\_\_

Account # (from your bill) \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Owing \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total annual household income \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Source of income ("X" Appropriate Boxes):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Employment                                     | <input type="checkbox"/> MFIP/GA/Food                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unemployment/Worker's Compensation             | <input type="checkbox"/> Stamps/MSA                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Child Support                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> I do not pay for my own medical expenses. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Security/SSI and/or Disability/Pensions | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medical Assistance/GA Medical Care/MN Care     |  |

No. of persons in household (Include yourself) \_\_\_\_\_

Please check if any of the following exists in your home:

- Medical emergency
- Disabled person in home
- I have already been approved for fuel assistance or emergency assistance from a local energy assistance agency based on my income.

By signing this form, I hereby authorize any gas or electric utility that serves us to exchange billing information. I also authorize any energy assistance providers or human service agencies to exchange any income information to help determine income eligibility. I acknowledge that I have received, read and understand the enclosed Notice of Residential Customer Rights and Possible Assistance. I attest that the above information is true and correct.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Income documentation must be included with this form per the notice instructions.

## NOTICE OF RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER RIGHTS AND POSSIBLE ASSISTANCE

This notice informs you of your rights and responsibilities under the Cold Weather Law. It is designed to help you with high winter electric bills. You must act PROMPTLY. If you choose not to assert your rights or choose not to enter a mutually acceptable payment plan, your service may be disconnected.

An electric cooperative must not disconnect the utility service of a residential customer during the period between October 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit when the following conditions are met:

- (1) the household income of the customer is at or below 50 percent of the state median income. Income may be verified on forms provided by the cooperative or by the local energy assistance provider. A customer meets the income requirement if they receive energy assistance or other type of public assistance that uses an income eligibility threshold set at or below 50 percent of the state median income;
- (2) a customer enters into and makes reasonably timely payments under a payment agreement that considers the financial resources of the household; and
- (3) a customer receives from the cooperative referrals to energy assistance programs, weatherization, conservation, or other programs likely to reduce the customer's energy bills.

## THE COLD WEATHER LAW PROVIDES YOU WITH THESE OPTIONS

**The RIGHT** to request and complete the Cold Weather Disconnect Protection Form. If you do so and if your household income is less than 50% of the state median

income, the service affecting your primary heat source cannot be disconnected for nonpayment of your bill. However, we have the right to accept or reject your request based on information supplied or other supporting documentation.

**The RESPONSIBILITY**, if you choose to declare to complete the Cold Weather Disconnect Form you must return it to us within 15 days of the notice to disconnect. You must contact us immediately to arrange a payment plan.

**THE RIGHT** to a mutually agreeable payment schedule with us. The schedule will cover your existing arrears plus the estimated usage during the payment schedule period.

**The RIGHT** not to be involuntarily disconnected on a Friday or on a day before a holiday, or until at least 20 days after the postmark on the notice to disconnect or until 15 days after the notice and information has been personally delivered.

**The RIGHT** not to be disconnected until the utility investigates whether the residential unit is actually occupied when a customer does not respond to a disconnection notice. If the unit is found to be occupied, the utility must immediately inform the occupant of the provisions of this section. If the unit is unoccupied, the utility must give seven days' written notice of the proposed disconnection to the local energy assistance provider before making a disconnection.

**The RIGHT** to appeal the disconnection of service to the Tri-County Electric Cooperative Board of Directors. If you choose to appeal, you must deliver or mail a personal letter stating your situation and issues in dispute. Your letter must be in our hands before the date of disconnection. You will be notified when the Board of Directors will review your appeal and you may be present at the review. No disconnection of service will take place during the appeal process.