

Frequently Asked Questions – Ban on Disconnection of Homes this Winter for Customers of Electricity Distributors

Introduction

On November 2, 2017, the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) issued a Decision and Order banning licensed electricity distributors from disconnecting homes for non-payment during the winter. Here are some Frequently Asked Questions about the ban:

What does this mean for customers?

The OEB's Decision and Order bans electricity distributors from disconnecting or threatening to disconnect homes for non-payment from November 15 to April 30 every year, and requires that homes currently disconnected due to non-payment be reconnected without charge.

We have also banned the use of load control devices on homes during the same period and required electricity distributors to remove existing devices on homes, again without charge.

Electricity distributors are also not allowed to ask residential customers to pay account collection fees during the disconnection ban. If you have past due amounts on your bill the distributor may continue to charge late payment fees on these amounts.

What is a load control device?

It is a device that limits how much power – or when power – goes to a home. Some electricity distributors use load control devices as an alternative to disconnection.

Customers who wish to keep an existing load control device or have one installed may still ask their distributor if this service is available.

Does the OEB's Order mean customers will now be reconnected?

Yes. The OEB has ordered electricity distributors to reconnect homes that are currently disconnected for non-payment. This year, they must do that as soon as possible. In later years, reconnections must be done by November 15. Reconnection must be at no charge.

Other measures include the prompt removal of load control devices that have been installed on homes as an alternative to disconnection, and a prohibition on the installation of new devices during the disconnection ban.

Will those who are reconnected have to pay a fee?

No. Electricity distributors cannot charge a residential customer for being reconnected or returned to full service as required by the OEB's Decision and Order.

How long will it take for disconnected customers to be reconnected?

For this year, the OEB has ordered electricity distributors to reconnect homes as soon as possible; in later years, reconnections have to be done by November 15.

Reconnection times will vary by distributor according to their size and individual circumstances, and at all times safety requirements will need to be respected. Reconnections are a priority for the OEB, and we will be closely monitoring the pace of reconnection.

If a residential customer is currently disconnected they should contact their electricity distributor. If they are unable to resolve the issue with their distributor, they should contact us directly at 1-877-632-2727.

Does the disconnection ban apply to customers that have a contract with an energy retailer?

Yes. The OEB's Order applies to all residential customers that are served by a licensed electricity distributor, even if they have a contract with an energy retailer.

The Order does not apply to residential customers served by a unit sub-meter provider. As part of its customer service rules review the OEB is assessing disconnection rules for unit sub-meter providers.

Does the ban apply to customers of natural gas utilities?

The OEB's Order only applies to electricity distributors. Natural gas utilities have winter disconnection policies. Natural gas customers should contact their utility to ask about the policies that apply to them. The customer service rules review includes the natural gas utilities' disconnection policies.

The OEB is currently reviewing customer service rules, including disconnections, and a key part of that review includes consumer input. Have your say by participating in our customer rules survey www.oeb.ca/customerservicesurvey.