

TURN Energy FAQs

Q: I received a shut off notice. What should I do if I cannot pay the bill?

A: [PG&E](#), [SDG&E](#), [SoCal Gas](#) and [SoCal Edison](#) can offer customers who cannot pay their bills or are in danger of being shut off a payment plan that will allow you to continue receiving service while paying off your outstanding balance.

- Call your utility immediately!
- Ask for a payment plan that you can afford.
Alert your utility company if you or someone in your household would face serious health or Safety risks if your service were disconnected. The utility may offer you more flexible payment arrangements.
- File a [CPUC complaint](#) if your utility won't work with you.

Download our Fact Sheet: "[How to Avoid Electric or Gas Shut Offs](#)" for more information.

Q: When can a utility company shut me off?

A: Your energy or gas utility can send you a shut off notice and then shut off your service:

- If you do not pay your bill
- If you do not follow through on a payment arrangement.
- If you make a payment with a bad check.
- If you do not pay a deposit required by your utility.

How much notice does a utility have to give me before my service is disconnected?

A: Your utility must send you a notice 15 days before disconnecting your service, send another notice 48 hours before disconnection, and also try to contact you by telephone or in person at least 24 hours before shutting off your service. Utility notice practices vary slightly.

For more information go to:

[PG&E Electric Rule No. 8, Notices](#)

[PG&E Gas Rule No. 8, Notices](#)

[SCE Rule No. 8, Notices](#)

[SoCal Gas Rule No. 9](#)

[SDG&E, Electric Rule No. 11, Discontinuance of Service](#)

[SDG&E, Gas Rule No. 11, Discontinuance of Service](#)

Q: What if I can't pay my energy bill?

A: If you are unable to pay your bill on time or in full, contact your utility company as soon as possible and request an extension or payment arrangements.

You may also ask the utility to refer you to a resource for assistance in paying your bill.

Utility Contacts

PG&E – 1-800-743-5000
SCE- 1-800-655-4555
SoCal Gas- 1-800-427-2200
SDG&E- 1-800-4121-7343

Download our fact sheet “[Drowning in Your Utility Bills: Getting Help to Pay Bills](#)” for more information.

Q: My electric and/or gas service was shut off.

A: If your service is disconnected for nonpayment of a bill, you should contact your utility immediately by calling the number on the front of the bill to try and make payment arrangements to restore service. If you do not live in California, these tips may not help you.

Download our fact sheet “[How to Avoid Electric or Gas Shut Offs](#)” for more information.

Q: Can I be shut off if I am on medical baseline or have special medical needs?

A: If you are on Medical Baseline, Life Support, or self-certify to your utility that you have a serious illness or condition that could become life threatening if utility service is disconnected, your utility (PG&E, SCE, SoCal Gas, or SDG&E) must send a utility representative to your home before shutting off your utility service. That visit, which is required no matter what kind of meter you have**, can occur within a few days of when a shut off is scheduled or at the time of disconnection for non-payment. If you are home when the utility representative arrives, you may make a payment during this visit. Utility practices vary regarding the available payment options.

SDG&E and SoCal Gas will also provide additional notice before disconnecting customers known to be elderly (62 or older) or with a disability, including a 48 hour notice by telephone or visit, and where personal contact cannot be made by telephone or visit, by posting a notice at the customer’s home at least 48 hours prior to disconnection.

SoCal Gas will additionally send a utility representative to the home of a customer who notifies the utility (before the disconnection notice expires) that she or he is unable to deliver payment in time to avoid the disconnection because of age or disability, so that the representative can collect payment at the customer’s home. The utility may also verify the customer’s need. However, if the Utility company follows all proper steps and the bill cannot be paid, you can be shut off.

**If you have an analog meter a technician will manually disconnect you. If you have a smart meter you can be remotely disconnected.

Download our fact sheet for more information: [Have The Energy To Protect Your Health?](#)

Q: What is Medical Baseline?

A: This program provides an increase in your baseline allowance (the amount of energy that is charged at the lowest possible rate). It is available to customers at any income level. If someone in a household has multiple sclerosis, a life-threatening illness, is a paraplegic, quadriplegic, or requires regular use of life- support equipment, they may qualify for this additional allowance of electricity at the lower rate. Both the customer and their doctor must complete a Medical Baseline

Application. To learn more, call your utility company or download our fact sheet: [Have The Energy You Need To Protect Your Health? Medical Baseline Facts.](#)

Q: Can I have an extension on my due date?

A: You can always ask for an extension if you will not be able to pay your bill by the due date. However, they do not have to grant you one. Contact the company as soon as you know that you will not be able to make a full payment, not just after you get a notice. If a Customer Service Representative refuses to give you a reasonable extension, ask to speak to a supervisor. Some utilities allow customers to request an extension through their website.

Q: When can my utility ask for a deposit?

A: A utility may require a deposit if you are a new customer, were previously disconnected for non-payment, or for late payment. CARE/FERA customers cannot be charged a deposit for late payment.

Q: Do I have to pay a deposit after being disconnected?

A: The utilities can require any residential customers to pay a deposit after being disconnected. Utilities can also require customers who are not on CARE or FERA to pay a deposit for late payment of bills. In either case, the deposit is calculated at twice the average monthly bill. For CARE or FERA customers:

- For deposits equal to or less than \$150, customers unable to pay the deposit all at once should ask for up to three months to pay, and
- For deposits greater than \$150, customers unable to pay the deposit all at once should ask for up to six months to pay.

Q: How big a deposit can be required?

A: For electric and gas utilities, the deposit cannot exceed two times the average monthly bill for residential and small business service. For CARE/FERA customers the utility should provide 3 to 6 months to pay depending on the size of the deposit.

Q: How long can my deposit be held?

A: Most utilities will hold your deposit until you have established credit by paying bills on time for 12 consecutive months.

Q: How do I reestablish service?

A: After you've been shut off: The company will ask you to pay anything due on your account before reestablishing service. You may be able to set up a payment plan. After removing the balance from your account, you will probably be asked for a deposit to reestablish credit with the company. You may also be charged for the reconnection.

-After moving:

If you already have an account, you can transfer service to a new location by calling your utility or on your utility's website.

Q: Can other gas companies save you money?

A: The CPUC allows all residential customers to sign up for natural gas service directly from a non-utility gas supplier. If a company offering to save you money on your gas bill has contacted you, call your energy company and ask where you can find their historical monthly gas procurement rates, and gas price forecasts for the next year.

For more information download our fact sheet: [Tips For Careful Consumers](#)

Q: How can I dispute the charges on a utility bill?

A: Always contact the utility and try to resolve the problem with them. If you believe your bill is incorrect, contact your utility's customer service office immediately at the telephone number printed on the front of your bill. If you are not satisfied with the company's response, file a complaint with the [CPUC's Consumer Affairs Branch](#). In order to keep service on during the investigation, you may deposit the amount in dispute with the Commission

Q: Can the utility hold me responsible for a bill that is not in my name?

A: This varies from case to case. Generally, if there is an indication that you "benefited" from the utility service you can be held responsible for the bill. For example, if you share a home with another adult, each of you may be held liable for the bill, regardless of whose name the bill is under. Additionally, if you cosigned for a property you can be held responsible for the bill even if you did not live there. Contact the CPUC [Consumer Affairs Branch](#) (www.cpuc.ca.gov/complaints/) if you're unsatisfied with the utility's position. You can also go to your utilities website and review the "tariffs" or rules for more information.

[PG&E Electric Rule No. 3 Application For Service](#)

[SCE Rule 3 Application For Service](#)

[SoCalGas Rule 3 Application For Service](#)

[SDG&E Electric Rule 3 Application For Service](#)

[SDG&E Gas Rule 3 Application for Service](#)

Q: What is Baseline?

A: The baseline rate (or Tier 1 rate) is the first and lowest rate that is charged for a specified amount of electricity or natural gas used during the billing period, the so-called "baseline quantity." Baseline quantities are set for the summer and the winter seasons, and differ based on locations ("baseline territories") to account for climate differences in the large areas covered by California utilities. The California Public Utilities Code specifically requires that baseline quantities fall between 50 and 60% of average use for electric and gas customers in both the summer and winter, except that the baseline quantity for gas customers and all-electric customers must be set between 60 to 70% of average use during the winter heating season. Your climate zone can be found on your bill. The CPUC reviews baseline quantities every 3-4 years. The Commission holds public participation hearings to give consumers the opportunity to voice their concerns. Notifications of public hearings are included with billing inserts. TURN members are notified of upcoming opportunities for public participation. Non-members should check our website for updates on opportunities to make your voice heard

Q: I need help with my energy bills!

A: There are different programs you can look into.

If you need assistance in paying your energy bill, there are a number of places you can turn. First, contact your utility company to find out about their programs. Some utilities have shareholder-funded emergency payment assistance programs for their customers. These can provide cash assistance to help offset the costs of heating and cooling their homes. There are also other plans that may be of assistance to you in managing your energy bills, such as balanced payment plans. Download our fact sheet "[Getting Help To Pay Bills](#)"

[The California Alternative Rates for Energy \(CARE\)](#) gives low-income customers a discount of 30-35% on their electric bill and a 20% discount on their natural gas bill. This applies to customers of Southern California Edison (SCE), Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E), San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E), and Southern California Gas Company. To request an application form and more information, contact your utility company or go to their website.

[Family Electric Rate Assistance Program \(FERA\)](#) provides a 12% discount on electric bills to families with three or more people whose household income slightly exceeds the CARE allowances. FERA is available for customers of SCE, SDG&E and PG&E.

[The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program \(LIHEAP\)](#) can help you. LIHEAP provides financial assistance to eligible households to offset the costs of heating and/or cooling dwellings. For more information, call 1-866-675-6623.

You can also download our fact sheet for more information: "[Struggling to Pay Your Utility Bill?](#)"

Q: Can I change my billing cycle?

A: Yes, you should be able to ask the company to change when you receive bills. Many people find that their billing cycle is not aligned correctly with when they receive their pay checks or other bills. Companies can send bills any day of the month. Call the company and ask them to change when you receive your bill. Do this before you get a shut off notice!

Q: What can I do if the utility missed a scheduled appointment?

A: PG&E and SCE will credit \$30 to your account for a missed appointment unless certain exceptions apply. SoCal Gas will waive its service appointment charge if they miss the first appointment unless certain exceptions apply.

Q: What can I do to make my home more energy efficient?

A: The Energy Savings Assistance Program (ESAP) provides no-cost energy-saving home improvements, including appliances, and in some cases, furnace and water heater repair or replacement, for low-income households who meet the CARE guidelines. Energy-saving home improvements may include attic insulation, weather-stripping, caulking, low-flow showerheads, water heater blankets, door and building envelope repairs, energy efficient lighting, refrigerators, microwaves, air conditioners, and high-efficiency clothes washers, among other services. Renters and homeowners are eligible to participate in ESAP. To request an application form and more information, please contact your energy utility company.

The Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) provides free weatherization services to low income utility customers to improve the energy efficiency of homes, including attic insulation, weather stripping, minor housing repairs, and related energy conservation measures. For more information, call 1-866-675-6623.

You can also lower your energy bills by installing energy efficient appliances, many of which are eligible for rebates from the utilities. Check your utility's website for information about rebates and other energy efficiency resources.

Q: What can I do if I do not want a SmartMeter?

A: Customers can choose to Opt-Out for a \$75 upfront fee and a \$10 per month charge that lasts for 3 years. Low-income CARE/FERA customers will be charged \$10 to Opt-Out and \$5 per month. Opt-Out customers will receive the traditional analog utility meter.

TURN opposed the entire SmartMeter™ program because of its high cost and speculative, unproven benefits. More detailed information can be found on the [CPUC website](#).

Q: I heard my bill would go up if I get a SmartMeter installed?

A: We can't say that your PG&E bills will change simply because you get a SmartMeter™, but we do encourage SmartMeter™ customers to review their bills every month. If your usage remains the same, as it was when you had an analog meter, then your SmartMeter™ is operating properly.

Q: How often are analog meters read?

A: Pursuant to a CPUC ruling, opt-out customers' analog meters are read every other month. During months when meters are not read, customers will receive an estimated bill.

Q: How often do Gas and Electric SmartMeters transmit information?

A: Gas meters transmit information generally once a day to the gas utility through a wireless communications network. Electric meters collect data in hourly increments and transmit the information wirelessly to the utility.

Q: What to do if your bills have gone up after a SmartMeter was installed

A: Is the increase a significant one (such as an increase of 25% over the same time period last year)? Has your usage or the number of people in your home stayed the same? Are all your appliances working properly? If you answered yes to any of these questions, contact your utility company and ask them to have someone come out to check the meter. Ask them to make sure that the meter is correctly installed and if you live in an apartment or housing complex, ask them to make sure that the meter is connected to your residence only.

Q: How do I know when my meter will be read?

A: PG&E customers can go to the [PG&E web site](#) to view the meter-reading schedule (Please note that PG&E also states that the date may shift to an earlier or later date, due to business considerations.)

SCE posts a meter reading calendar on their website. Contact SCE for information.

SoCal Gas and SDG&E list the date your meter will be read on your bill. The date of your next meter read is located next to your meter number above the description of charges on your bill. If

you have an obstacle (gate, dog, etc.) that prevents technicians from easily accessing your meter, the company will inform you before they plan on reading your meter so you can give them access.

Q: Whom do I contact with safety concerns?

A: Call the utility immediately to report downed power lines or gas leaks. Keep yourself, others, and pets away from the area. For unresolved safety concerns, please contact the Commission's Consumer Affairs Branch at 1-800-649-7570.

Q: Is there more than one rate available for my gas and/or electric service?

A: In most cases there are multiple rates available for electric service. Most companies offer standard tiered rates and time-of-use plans, plus rates designed for customers with rooftop solar or an electric vehicle, among other options. Check with your utility to see what rates are available for you. If you can create an online account through your utility's website, you can compare your bills under different potential rates to select the one best for you.

Generally, there is only one gas rate available for residential customers but be sure to check with your utility to confirm.