

In Idaho, investor-owned utilities providing basic services such as electricity, gas, water and telecommunications services must follow rules that protect consumers. The rules are established and enforced by the Idaho Public Utilities Commission (IPUC). The IPUC is a state agency charged with regulating investor-owned utilities. (City-owned or cooperative utilities are not regulated by the IPUC). The rules say when a utility can and cannot ask a customer for a deposit before service can begin. The rules also limit the amount of a deposit and how long it may be kept by the utility.

This fact sheet answers common questions about your rights and responsibilities as a residential customer of a regulated gas, electric, or water utility.

## **When can a utility company require a deposit?**

The utility company can require a deposit if:

- You owe an undisputed bill to the utility company accrued within the last four years that remains unpaid.
- Your service with the utility has been disconnected within the last four years for one or more of the following reasons:
  1. Non-payment of an undisputed past-due bill;
  2. Misrepresentation of your identity to obtain service;
  3. Failure to pay the company for damages due to negligent or intentional acts; and
  4. Unauthorized utility service.
- You supply false or misleading information to the company.
- You did not have service with the utility for twelve consecutive months during the last four years and did not pass an objective credit screen.
- You request service at a residence where a former customer still lives who owes the utility a past-due balance incurred at the residence.
- The utility has given you two or more written final notices of termination within the last twelve consecutive months.
- You have filed bankruptcy.

## **Will my income or job affect my deposit requirement?**

No, the utility company can only require a deposit for the reasons previously listed.

## **Does the utility have to tell me why a deposit is being requested?**

The utility must provide an explanation to the applicant or customer explaining why the utility is asking for a deposit. The customer or applicant will be given the opportunity to rebut the reasons.

### **How much can the utility company ask for a deposit?**

The deposit will equal one-sixth of the reasonably estimated annual bill at your service address. If you have had service at that address before, the company will base your deposit on previous usage.

The deposit for natural gas utility customers who use natural gas for heating purposes only cannot exceed the total of the two highest bills during the previous twelve consecutive months, adjusted for current rates.

### **How long can I take to pay the deposit?**

You may pay the deposit in two installments: one-half at the time you apply for service and the remaining installment in one month.

### **Can someone guarantee my deposit for me?**

Some utilities may accept a guarantor (another customer of the utility with good credit and the same class of service) in lieu of a deposit. The guarantee will remain in effect for the same period of time that a cash deposit would be held. The Commission's Utilities Customer Relation Rules do not require that utilities offer this option to its customers.

### **Will I get my deposit back?**

Yes, the deposit plus interest will either be refunded or applied to your account after you have paid all undisputed bills and you have no more than one late payment for the past twelve consecutive months.

If you disconnect service before your deposit is refunded, the utility will apply the deposit and any accrued interest to the final bill. Any remaining balance will be refunded to you.

### **Will I earn interest on my deposit?**

Yes, interest is earned on the deposit for the time it is held. Interest will not accrue on an account temporarily disconnected at the customer's request or that is permanently disconnected and the utility has been unsuccessful in its attempt to refund the deposit. The interest may vary from year to year, so ask your utility what the current interest rate is.

### **Can I use my deposit to pay a monthly bill?**

No, the deposit cannot be used to pay a past due bill.

### **What if I lose the receipt for my deposit?**

The Company must maintain records of all deposits that are paid, so you will still be able to get a refund.

**What happens to my deposit if I move?**

If you move within the same utility company's service area, the deposit will be transferred to the account for the new location or credited to your account for the old address. If your deposit is credited to your previous address, you may be asked to pay a new deposit at the new address

**What if the Company and I can't agree?**

If you have a dispute with a utility company, you may contact the IPUC at 208.334.0369 or 1.800.432.0369. An IPUC staff member will help you resolve your dispute. You can also visit the IPUC online at [www.puc.idaho.com](http://www.puc.idaho.com).