



## Public Utility Commission of Texas

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# PUCT Adopts Rule Prohibiting Disconnection of Water Service During Extreme Cold Weather Emergency

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## *New Rules Apply to non-Municipal Public Water and Sewer Utilities*

**Austin, Texas** – The Public Utility Commission of Texas (PUCT) today adopted rules prohibiting non-municipal public water and sewer utilities from disconnecting customers during extreme cold weather emergencies. The new rules mean those utilities cannot disconnect service or issue late fees for nonpayment of bills due during such emergencies, including for bills previously due.

“The new rules put the health and safety of Texans first during extreme cold weather emergencies,” said PUCT Chairman Peter Lake. “This means Texans can focus on their family’s safety during extreme cold and work with their water or sewer utility to make sure they pay their bills in a timely fashion.”

By rule, extreme cold weather emergencies are periods beginning when the previous day’s highest temperature in an area did not exceed 28 degrees Fahrenheit and the temperature is predicted to remain at or below that level for the next 24 hours according to the nearest National Weather Service reports for that area. For purposes of these rules, an extreme weather emergency ends on the second business day the temperature exceeds 28 degrees Fahrenheit.

Under the new rules, affected customers have a 30-day window to request a payment schedule. If a customer makes a request within those 30 days, the service provider must offer them a payment schedule. All non-municipal water and sewer utilities are required to notify their customers of these new rules by January 31, 2023.

The new rules are required under Senate Bill 3, passed by the 87<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature and signed into law by Gov. Greg Abbott.

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### **About the Public Utility Commission**

Our mission is to serve Texans by regulating the state's electric, telecommunication, and water and sewer utilities, implementing respective legislation, and offering customer assistance in resolving consumer complaints. Since its founding in 1975, the Commission has a long and proud history of service to Texas, protecting customers, fostering competition, and promoting high quality infrastructure. To learn more, please visit <https://www.puc.texas.gov>.