



## Assistance Agencies

Call 2-1-1 any time — 24 hours a day, 365 days a year — to connect to vital services in your community. This service is free and multilingual. 2-1-1 is for finding community health and human services resources.

**Aiken/Barnwell Counties Community Action Commission, Inc.**  
(803) 648-6836

**Beaufort/Jasper Economic Opportunity Commission, Inc.**  
(843) 470-4508

**Carolina Community Actions, Inc.**  
(803) 329-5195

**Charleston County Human Services Commission**  
(843) 723-9285

**Chesterfield-Marlboro Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.**  
(843) 320-9760

**Darlington County Community Action Agency**  
(843) 332-1135

**GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission, Inc.**  
(864) 223-8434

**Lowcountry Community Action Agency, Inc.**  
(843) 549-5576

**O-C-A-B Community Action Agency, Inc.**  
(803) 536-1027

**Pee Dee Community Action Agency**  
(843) 678-3400

**Piedmont Community Actions, Inc.**  
(864) 327-4546

**Sunbelt Human Advancement Resources, Inc. (SHARE)**  
(864) 269-0700

**Waccamaw Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.**  
(843) 234-4100

**Wateree Community Actions, Inc.**  
(803) 775-4354

**American Red Cross - Central South Carolina**  
(803) 540-1200

## ABOUT THE ORS

The South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) represents consumers of investor-owned utilities in South Carolina before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (PSC). The PSC is the state agency that sets utilities' rates. The ORS must look at the impact to the consumer and utilities' continued investment in reliable and high-quality services.

### ORS Consumer Services Can Help

If you've spoken with your utility and still need help, ORS Consumer Services can contact the company on your behalf. The ORS can check to see whether the utility has followed all applicable regulations. Staff can also direct you to social services agencies that may have available funds to assist with your utility bills.



8:30 AM - 5:00 PM  
Monday - Friday (closed state holidays)  
Messages can be left on 24-hour ORS Consumer Services hotline.



(803) 737-5230 (Columbia, SC)  
(800) 922-1531 (toll-free in SC)



# Electric & Natural Gas Safety Net

# GETTING BEHIND ON YOUR BILL?

Electric and natural gas utilities offer “safety net” programs or benefits to help consumers in certain situations who may struggle to pay their bills. You may be able to take advantage of one or more of the following:

- Become classified as a consumer who qualifies for special consideration
- Become classified as a medical certificate consumer
- Spread your past-due balance over several months
- Give permission for another person to receive a copy of your disconnection notice

## See if You Qualify as a Special Consideration Consumer

Consumers in this category qualify for special consideration if they face having their electric or natural gas service turned off (disconnected). Also, your utility can use this information to contact you during emergencies such as storms. This program does not prevent your service from being disconnected for not paying your bill. To qualify for this category, you must be at least one of the following:

- 65 years of age or older
- Disabled
- Chronically ill
- Seriously ill
- On life support as noted by a medical certificate

Consumers who qualify should register with their electric or natural gas utility. The utility should let you know about this category and the benefits it provides when you first sign up for service. If you request it, the utility should provide you:

- A registration form
- A medical certificate form to be completed by a licensed health care provider

## See if You Qualify as a Medical Certificate Consumer

If you have a medical certificate on file with your utility, then your utility should not disconnect electric and/or natural gas service at your home for not paying your bill. This program is in effect from December 1 through March 31 each year. To qualify, follow these steps:

1. Request a medical certificate form from your utility.
2. You and your licensed health care provider must fill out the medical certificate form.
3. Your health care provider must certify that you received a medical exam and that disconnection of electric and/or natural gas service would be dangerous to your health because of a medical condition.
4. Turn in the completed medical certificate form to your utility.

By completing the form, you certify that you are unable to pay in full or by installment payments. It is important to know that having a medical certificate on file with your utility does NOT mean you no longer have to pay your bill. When your certificate expires or through the end of March — whichever comes first — your service may be disconnected if payment is not made.



Make sure you know your rights with regulated utilities.

## Spread Your Past-Due Balance Over Several Months

If you have a past-due balance, your utility may set up a payment plan that divides your past-due balance into a maximum of 6 monthly payments. This is called a Deferred Payment Plan, or DPP. With this plan, it is important to know:

- You must continue to pay current billed charges while you also pay off your past-due balance.
- If you do not keep up with the payment plan, the utility may disconnect your service after sending you (and anyone else you have authorized) a written disconnection notice.

## Give Permission for Another Person to Receive a Copy of Your Disconnection Notice

You may want another person to receive a copy of a notice for your account if your electric or natural gas service is scheduled to be disconnected. You must contact your utility to make this request. The utility needs the name, address, and telephone number of the person you select in order to send him/her a copy of your disconnection notice.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Electric or natural gas service for consumers will not be disconnected if temperatures fall within a certain range.

A utility should not disconnect service when:

- Average forecasted temperature is 32° F or below for a 48-hour period
- Forecasted heat index is 105° F or more for a 24-hour period