

can present testimony. The Public Staff may provide a lawyer to help you present your testimony. After hearing the testimony, the Commission will make a decision and enter an order dealing with your complaint.

This statement gives you a summary of ***your rights*** as a residential customer of a natural gas company regulated by the Utilities Commission. More detailed provisions are set out in the law, Commission rules and the tariffs of the companies. The Utilities Commission wants to inform you of ***your rights*** as a consumer and wants you to understand the responsibilities of the natural gas companies and to call upon the Public Staff or the Utilities Commission for help.

# Bill of Rights

## For Residential Customers

The North Carolina Utilities Commission has prepared this statement and is making it available to you. The Commission wants customers of natural gas companies to know their rights and whom to contact for help when they have questions or problems. This statement is prepared for residential customers of natural gas companies regulated by the North Carolina Utilities Commission.

### BE AN INFORMED CUSTOMER. KNOW YOUR RIGHTS.

1. As a general rule, ***you have the right*** to establish natural gas service if you satisfactorily establish your credit, provide the gas company with necessary and reasonable access to your property, and there is already natural gas service in your area. If there are no natural gas mains near your home, you may or may not have the right to have mains extended to serve you. If mains are extended to serve you, you may be required to pay part of the cost of the extension. If you have a question about your right to natural gas service, you should contact the gas company serving your part of the state.

2. ***You have the right*** to establish your credit in any one of five ways:

(a) you may show that you own land within the county (however, if you are an unsatisfactory credit risk, you cannot establish your credit in this way and you must establish your credit in one of the other four ways);

(b) you may provide acceptable credit references;

(c) you may show that you have been a residential customer of the same gas company within the last 24 months and established a good payment record over the last 12 months that service was provided;

(d) you may provide a satisfactory person to guarantee payment of your bills up to a certain amount if you do not pay them; or

(e) you may make a cash deposit with the company.

***You have the right*** to have all means of establishing credit explained to you by the gas company's personnel. If you have a problem establishing credit with the company, ***you have the right***



to seek help from the Consumer Services Division of the Public Staff and the right to review by the Commission, as explained in paragraphs 13 and 14 following.

3. If you make a cash deposit with the gas company in order to establish your credit, **you have the right** to have the deposit returned to you (plus interest at 8% if the deposit is held more than 90 days) if you later establish your credit by other means, pay your bills promptly for a year, or if you discontinue service with the gas company.

4. After the billing date shown on your gas bill, **you have the right** to 25 days to pay the bill before it will be considered past due.

5. **You have the right** to be given written notice at least 10 days before your gas service can be cut off for your failure to pay your gas bills. This notice must explain the reason why the gas company plans to cut off the service, state the date on which the company proposes to cut off service, and explain what you can do to keep the service from being cut off.

6. **You have the right** to name someone else to receive a copy of any cut-off notice sent to you. This other person may be able to help you avoid having your gas service cut off, but they are not obligated to pay your bills for you.

7. **You have the right** to notify the gas company if there is someone in your household who is either chronically or seriously ill, disabled or on a life-support system and, in that case, you have the right to careful handling of your account should service become subject to being cut off for your failure to pay your gas bills.

8. If the gas company plans to cut off your gas service because you have not paid your gas bills and if you can show that you are unable to pay your account in full at once, **you have the right** to make installment payments designed to pay your account in full within six months. If you cannot pay your account by installments, the company cannot cut off your service during the winter (between November 1 and March 31) without approval of the Utilities Commission, if there is someone elderly (65 years of age or older) or disabled in your household and if you are eligible to receive energy assistance from the local social services department.

9. As a general rule, the company cannot cut off your gas service after 4 p.m. on a Friday or on a weekend or a holiday. Whenever the gas company plans to cut off your service, **you have the right** to seek help from the Consumer Services Division of the Public Staff and, if

they cannot help, **you have the right** to file a complaint with the Utilities Commission.

10. If you suspect a malfunction, **you have the right** to have the gas company test your gas meter for accuracy once during an 18-month period, without charge, and to have a report of the test results given to you.

11. **You have the right** to have the gas company help you in selecting the most economical rate schedule, inform you as to how your gas meter is read and furnish additional reasonable information.

12. **You have the right** to have any questions or complaints considered by your gas company. The company may not agree with you, but **you have the right** to prompt and courteous treatment by the company.

13. If you need help with a complaint against your gas company that you cannot resolve by dealing with the company on your own, **you have the right** to call on the Consumer Services Division of the Public Staff. The Public Staff is a state agency created to investigate complaints affecting the using and consuming public and to represent the public in proceedings before the Utilities Commission. The Consumer Services Division of the Public Staff will work with you and the company in an effort to resolve your complaint informally. The Consumer Services Division office is in Raleigh, and its telephone number is (866) 380-9816.

14. If you cannot resolve your complaint by working with the gas company or with the Consumer Services Division of the Public Staff, **you have the right** to file a formal complaint against the company with the Utilities Commission. You do not need a lawyer to do this. To file a formal complaint, you should send out in writing your name and address, the name of the gas company, a clear and concise statement of your complaint, and what you want the Utilities Commission to do about your complaint. The complaint should be mailed to the North Carolina Utilities Commission, 4325 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-4325. The Commission will send a copy of your complaint to the gas company. The company will either satisfy your complaint or file an answer with the Utilities Commission. If the company does not satisfy your complaint and if you want a hearing, the Commission will schedule a public hearing, unless it determines that no reasonable ground exists for a hearing. At the hearing, both you and the company