

# Notice Residential Customer Rights and Possible Assistance

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission has issued Cold Weather Rule (216B.097 as amended by Minnesota Laws 1991, Chapter 235, Article 2, Section 1) which provides that from October 15<sup>th</sup> through April 15, a utility cannot disconnect a residential utility customer for nonpayment if the disconnection would affect your primary heat source and you enter into a mutually agreed upon payment schedule with your utility.

The purpose of the notice is to inform you of your rights and responsibilities under the Cold Weather Rule. These rights and responsibilities are designed to help you with winter utility bills. You must act PROMPTLY! If you choose not to assert your rights or choose not to enter into a mutually acceptable payment schedule, your service may be disconnected.

## **Specifically, the cold Weather Rule provides you with these options:**

THE RIGHT to declare your inability to pay your utility bill. If you do so, your service affecting your primary heat source cannot be disconnected for nonpayment of your bill, if you enter into a payment schedule with the utility. However, the Breckenridge Public Utilities may appeal this declaration of inability to pay to the Breckenridge Public Utilities Commission, at which time you will have to provide the Breckenridge Public Utilities proof that you are unable to pay and were current in your payments to the Breckenridge Public Utilities. Your service cannot be disconnected until this appeal is resolved.

THE RESPONSIBILITY, if you choose to declare inability to pay, to complete the enclosed "Inability to Pay" form and return it to the Breckenridge Public Utilities within 10 days. Upon mailing this form, you must contact the Breckenridge Public Utilities to arrange a payment plan.

THE RIGHT to a mutually acceptable payment schedule with the Breckenridge Public Utilities. This payment schedule will cover your existing arrears plus the estimated usage during the payment schedule period. If you are able to pay but still wish to enter into a payment schedule, contact the Breckenridge Public Utilities immediately to arrange a schedule. (This payment schedule may be arranged by your designated third party.)

THE RESPONSIBILITY of making payments as agreed, or promptly notifying the Breckenridge Public Utilities as to why you cannot keep the agreement. You may then request that the original payment schedule be changed. Any change is initially subject to the Breckenridge Public Utilities approval.

THE RIGHT to request that the Breckenridge Public Utilities notify a third party if your service becomes subject to disconnection. Third party notification forms have already been mailed to you. If you have requested third party notification, a copy of this notice has been sent to the third party.

THE RESPONSIBILITY to receive Budget Counseling from the local energy assistance provider or other financial counseling organization. A list of these agencies is included in this brochure.

Disputes regarding the previously listed options can be appealed to the Breckenridge Public Utility. Copies of the Cold Weather Rule are available at the Breckenridge Public Utilities Office.

If you need help paying your gas or electric utility bills, you may qualify for state or federal fuel assistance. For complete qualifications and application information, contact your local county welfare or Community/ Citizens' Action Council. A partial list of these organizations is listed here. Ask your utility for local providers if you do not see one listed here. These organizations may also provide budget counseling pursuant to Minn. Rules, part 7820.2010.

**MINNESOTA ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROVIDERS IN THE BRECKENRIDGE AREA:**

West Central MN Communities Action, Inc.  
411 Industrial Park Blvd.  
Elbow Lake, MN 56531  
218-685-4486  
1-800-492-4805

Wilkin County Family Services  
225 North 6<sup>th</sup> Street  
Breckenridge, MN 56520  
218-643-8561  
1-800-452-3646

Salvation Army HeatShare  
Wilkin County Courthouse  
300 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Breckenridge, MN  
218-643-7134