

# NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AS COVID-19 SHUT OFF MORATORIUMS EXPIRE, THE NEW MEXICO PUBLIC REGULATION COMMISSION ISSUES ORDER TO ENCOURAGE SMALL UTILITIES CUSTOMERS TO APPLY FOR AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE AND PAY OFF ARREARAGES

(SANTA FE, NM—MAY 6)— On May 5, 2021, the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (PRC) issued an order providing protection to customers who are waiting for an application for relief funds to process. The order comes just as moratoriums on disconnections expired on May 4, for small water, gas and rural electric cooperative utilities, allowing these utilities to begin serving disconnection notices to residential customers who were previously protected.

PRC considered emergency health conditions the highest priority and worked with utilities to ease concerns regarding disconnections. Payment plans are being offered by utility companies to assist customers in paying off their past due balances. Rental assistance programs and other relief programs are now available that provide some utility assistance, as well. The PRC encourages utility customers with past due balances to reach out to their utility companies for assistance.

The most recent order issued by the PRC on Wednesday states that a customer cannot be disconnected while an application for relief funds (from the Emergency Rental Assistance Program or other state, federal, or private sources) is being processed. Customers who rent their homes can apply for ERAP funds online at [www.renthelpnm.org](http://www.renthelpnm.org) or by calling 1-833-485-1334.

Under previous orders from the PRC, residential customers cannot be disconnected for nonpayment if they have agreed to an installment plan and are complying with it. The

PRC also ordered installment plans “should be extended as long as needed for the customer to be able to fulfill the terms”.

In anticipation of the moratorium expiration, the PRC held a public workshop for stakeholders, including utility companies and customers, last week. Through the workshop, PRC learned that 8.7% or 21,251 of small utilities’ residential accounts are in arrears. Total residential arrears for small utilities are \$7.5 million, and the average account is \$354 past due. Stakeholder input also revealed that utilities were having trouble getting customers to agree to installment plans while the moratorium was in place. According to responses from the April 19 bench request, less than 2% of the 21,251 residential accounts in arrears are on installment plans.

PRC intends to keep the conversation with utilities going and plans to hold a similar workshop with large utilities later this summer. The moratorium is in place for large, investor-owned utilities until August 12.

*The New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (PRC) regulates the [utilities](#), [telecommunications](#), and [motor carrier](#) industries to ensure fair and reasonable rates, and to assure reasonable and adequate services to the public as provided by law.*

*The NMPRC also promotes public safety through the offices of [State Fire Marshal](#), the [Firefighter Training Academy](#), [Pipeline Safety Bureau](#) and [Transportation Division](#).*

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