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State energy moratorium ends April 15

Locally owned utility has options available to help customers avoid disconnection

New Richmond Utilities encourages customers to take action before the Wisconsin moratorium on residential service disconnections ends in mid-April. By making a payment arrangement, residents can avoid having their electricity shut off if they are behind on their bills.

"Disconnecting customers is a last resort," said Stacie Running, Utility Office Supervisor of New Richmond Utilities, "But we do have a responsibility to keep costs in check for all our customers, which includes collecting unpaid bills. Anyone who's having trouble paying their past due balance can call the utility. They should also consider contacting assistance programs like WHEAP because they likely qualify if they've encountered this problem."

The Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) provides bill pay assistance to help income-eligible residents with heating costs, electricity costs and energy crises. Residents at risk of disconnection may be eligible for crisis assistance even if they have already received a benefit from WHEAP. For more information, including eligibility criteria, customers can call 1-866-432-8947 or visit energyandhousing.wi.gov to connect with their local energy assistance agency.

The deadline to apply for WHEAP's regular benefit is May 15.

Additionally, residents experiencing hardship can seek assistance through OPERATION HELP. The organization has been assisting residents of St. Croix County for more than 30 years and can be contacted at operationhelpstcroix.org or 715-386-1300. New Richmond Utilities has partnered with OPERATION HELP to help residents with bill assistance, finding resources, etc.

In the event the utility must limit service, staff will issue a final disconnection notice on April 7, and disconnections will commence April 20th. To learn more about payment options, call New Richmond Utilities at 715-246-4167.

"We want everyone in the community to know there is help," said Running**.** "If you're struggling with paying your bill, please give us a call so we can figure it out together."

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