



# What to do if your landlord does not pay the utility bill

## Do I have to pay the utilities?

It depends on your lease.

Some leases say the tenant is responsible for paying the utilities. Some leases say the landlord is responsible for paying the utilities. Some leases have the tenant paying some utilities and the landlord paying others. If you have a written lease, you should check to see what it says.

If you do not have a written lease, and your landlord has not agreed to pay the utilities in writing, you will generally have to pay the utilities.

## My landlord is supposed to pay for a utility, but I just got a shut-off notice! What should I do?

If you get a shut-off notice from a utility that your landlord was supposed to pay, you need to act **very quickly**. If you are the person responsible for paying the bill, then this information will not help you.

**FIRST:** Contact the landlord and request that he or she pay the bill and avoid further problems.

**NEXT:** If this does not work, call the utility company to see what can be done to have the account transferred into your name. Some utilities have simple steps to transfer the account. For other utilities, you may have to make a deposit, have a separate meter, or get permission from your landlord. Some utilities cannot be transferred out of the property owner's name.

## Who can I call?

If your utility is regulated by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO), there are rules that utilities have to follow before shutting off service. You should call PUCO at 800-686-7826 to see if PUCO can assist you. Rural electric co-op's and city-owned utilities are not regulated by PUCO.

If your utility is not regulated by PUCO, call the utility directly or contact an attorney.

## When should I talk to an attorney?

Call an attorney right away if:

- You did not get a shut-off notice but the utility was disconnected.
- Your landlord is required by the lease to pay the utility, but won't make a payment to stop a shutoff or get the utility turned back on.
- Your landlord is required by the lease to pay the utility, but is demanding that you pay it.
- Your landlord is threatening to evict you because you haven't paid a utility bill, even though you have paid your rent.

**This information is based on current Landlord-Tenant laws, which are subject to change.**

### **For free help contact:**

The Legal Aid Society of Columbus

Call: (740) 383-2161 or Toll-Free 1-888-301-2411

Visit: [www.columbuslegalaid.org](http://www.columbuslegalaid.org)

150 Oak Street, Marion, OH 43302

Office Hours: 9 a.m.- 4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday

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