

Bulletin 2020-10

March 27, 2020

Suspension of specified penalties program for self-reported contraventions

On March 18, 2020, the Alberta government announced a utility payment deferral program to help Albertans avoid additional financial hardship in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. That 90-day program allows residential, farm and small commercial customers experiencing financial hardship as a direct result of COVID-19 to defer payment of electricity and natural gas bills, and ensures no customer's site is cut off, regardless of the service provider. The program came into effect on March 18, 2020 and will run through June 18, 2020.

The Alberta Utilities Commission declared its support for this program in Bulletin 2020-08.

The AUC recognizes that Alberta's electric and natural gas utilities, service providers and retailers are working hard to put in place measures to respond to this program. To ensure that these organizations can focus their resources on helping their customers during this unprecedented public health emergency, the AUC, exercising its regulatory discretion around the issuance of notices of specified penalty under AUC Rule 032: *Specified Penalties for Contravention of AUC Rules*, is putting in place the following measures:

1. No new notices of specified penalty for any contraventions that arose prior to March 18, 2020, will be issued during the 90-day deferral period from March 18 to June 18, 2020. Any notices of specified penalty issued prior to March 18, 2020, will continue in effect.
2. After June 18, 2020, for any **self-reported** contraventions that arose prior to March 18, 2020, the Commission will only consider issuing notices of specified penalty for contraventions that resulted in disconnections of a customer's site in error if that customer's site was disconnected for a period in excess of 24 hours. A notice of specified penalty will not be issued for any other **self-reported** contraventions.
3. After June 18, 2020, for any **self-reported** contraventions that arise during the 90-day deferral period, the Commission will only consider issuing notices of specified penalty for contraventions that resulted in disconnections of a customer's site in error if that customer's site was disconnected for a period in excess of 24 hours. A notice of specified penalty will not be issued for any other **self-reported** contraventions.

The AUC recognizes the uncertainties regarding the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 outbreak and will continue to evaluate the situation. Our goal is to ensure all Alberta's electric and gas utilities, service providers and retailers balance the concerns for the health and welfare of their workforce while staying focused on supplying natural gas and electricity to their customers.

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