

# Handbook for Customers of Upper Peninsula Power Company

This booklet is provided to customers in accordance with the rules of the Michigan Public Service Commission.



## **INTRODUCTION**

Upper Peninsula Power Company (UPPCO) is an electric utility serving approximately 54,000 customers in 10 of the 15 counties in Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

The Michigan Public Service Commission regulates our services. This commission is a state government agency located in Lansing. It regulates all of the gas and electric companies in Michigan, except those operated by cities, all of the telephone companies, and a few small water companies. It sets the rates we can charge you, makes sure there is adequate and safe service, and investigates customer complaints and problems.

The Public Service Commission establishes rules about customer-utility relationships, including payments of bills, late charges, security deposits, complaint handling, service shutoffs, hearings and other matters. This booklet explains many of those rights.

# **INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS BOOKLET**

## **Fair Treatment**

We at Upper Peninsula Power Company have procedures to promptly and courteously handle your questions, requests for service or complaints. These procedures, which have been standardized by the Michigan Public Service Commission, are also used by other Michigan utilities.

## **Meter Readings and Bill Calculations**

Instructions on meter reading and bill calculation are contained in this booklet.

## **Resolving Problems**

If you do not feel you are being treated fairly, you may challenge the decisions we have made. We encourage you to please consider working with us regarding the situation. The Public Service Commission has created a step-by-step procedure any customer can follow to ensure fair treatment. This information is contained in this booklet.

## **Other Information**

This booklet may not answer every question you have about your electric service. If you would like more information UPPCO invites you to visit our website at [www.uppco.com](http://www.uppco.com) or call UPPCO at 906-449-2013 or 800-562-7680.

Our contact information is as follows:

**UPPCO Contact Center** ....906-449-2013  
.....800-562-7680  
**Monday – Friday 7 a.m. to 6 p.m EST**

**Customer Service Email**  
..... customerservice@uppcocom

**24-Hour Electric Emergencies  
or Power Outages** .....906-449-2011  
.....800-562-7809

Outage reporting can also be done in our  
online customer portal.

**MISS DIG**.....811 or 1-800-482-7171

**Website** .....www.uppcocom

## **METER READINGS**

Most meters are read bimonthly and use  
computer-generated estimates for the  
months between readings.

Because you tend to use a fairly regular  
amount of energy every day, we  
compile ongoing data that helps make  
our estimates increasingly accurate as  
we develop a history on your usage.  
We encourage you to contact us if  
you anticipate a significant change in  
your monthly electric usage to avoid  
underestimated or overestimated usage  
and help ensure accuracy.

If we are unable to obtain an actual  
reading due to safety or access issues, you  
will be notified on your bill of this reason.

Of course, if we overestimate or  
underestimate your energy use, we adjust  
your bill for the difference the next time  
we read your meter.

## **READING YOUR OWN METER**

You may want to read your own meter for these reasons:

- To avoid estimated bills.
- Your meter may be located inside your home or in a locked area when the meters are being read in your neighborhood. At your request, we can supply return mail meter reading cards to you. You can use this card to mark your meter reading and send it to us through the mail. You can also call in the reading. We encourage you to phone in your meter reading or submit it in our online customer portal or via email ([customerservice@uppc.com](mailto:customerservice@uppc.com)) to ensure timely billing. We are required to obtain an actual meter reading annually.

## **HOW TO READ YOUR OWN METER**

Your home may have a mechanical or digital meter. Reading either type of meter is designed to be easy.

Mechanical meters have dials which look like little clocks. The dials alternatively run clockwise and counterclockwise. Reading from left to right, just write down the last number the needle has passed (UPPCO uses the lower of the two numbers). The difference between the new reading and the last one is your monthly energy use. Digital meters are much like reading your vehicle's odometer. Reading from left to right, simply right down the last five or six numbers shown. The difference between the new reading and the last one is your monthly energy use.

If you have any questions about reading your meter, or estimated bills, please call us at 906-449-2013 or 800-562-7680.

## **BILL MAILINGS**

We mail your bill approximately the same day every month. Your bill shows the next date we plan to read your meter. You can locate this date next to the phrase "Next Meter Read Date" on your bill. Your bill is mailed approximately two days after your meter is read. If there is a major change in the schedule for reading your meter, we will notify you by mail at least 10 days before the change. You may also elect electronic, paperless billing by signing up in our online customer portal.

## **ELECTRIC CHARGES**

The amount of electricity you use is measured in kilowatt-hours (kWh).

The charge for electricity is broken down into four items:

- 1) The Service Charge- a daily charge that helps cover the fixed costs of providing service to customers. This includes equipment, billing and programs.
- 2) The Energy Charge- a charge that varies with the amount of electricity you use. You are charged for each kWh of the actual electric supply that you use and for the delivery of the electricity. This charge is broken down into two components; Distribution and Power Supply Service.
- 3) The Power Supply Recovery Charge or Credit- this is applied when our actual

cost to produce or purchase electricity is higher or lower than what was projected in your rates.

4) State sales tax, when applicable.

## **PAYMENT DUE DATE**

The due date of your payment is located on the upper right corner of your bill stub. This date is a full 21 days from the day we mail you your bill.

## **BUDGET PLAN**

The Budget Billing plan is available to all residential year-round customers and small commercial customers with a primary purpose of service for residential living. A budget plan may be established at any time of the year.

The budget plan distributes the estimated annual payments into equal amounts over a 12-month period. This lessens the impact of large bills. The budget year begins with the customer's first bill on the budget plan and ends after 12 months. An adjustment is shown on the bill during the first 11 months of the budget year to make the amount due for current service equal to the budget amount. The difference between the actual billing and the budget amount is accumulated and is applied to the bill on the last month of the budget year, unless the customer discontinues service before that time or the budget is canceled for some reason. We do periodic reviews of your budget to ensure your budget amount is accurate and appropriate.

## SECURITY DEPOSITS

When we do require a deposit, it is according to an approved set of procedures.

We will not require a deposit or other guarantee based on commercial credit standards, income, home ownership, residential location, race, color, creed, sex, age, national origin, marital status, family status, disability or any criteria not authorized by the Public Service Commission.

We will not require a cash deposit when:

- Payment is the responsibility of a government department of human services.
- The applicant finds a customer of good standing who guarantees the new account will be paid.
- The applicant is 65 years of age or older and has a satisfactory payment history for the past three years with any gas or electric provider.

A deposit may be required if the residential customer:

- Owes money for service received sometime during the past six years and is not in dispute.
- Misrepresents his/her identity when applying for new service or fails to provide positive identification upon request.
- Has tampered with or attempted to bypass company meters or equipment within the last six years.
- Requests service at someone else's



home or apartment.

- Has submitted one or more payments to UPPCO during the past year which were returned due to insufficient funds or no account.
- Has sought relief under Federal bankruptcy laws within the past six years.
- Asks that service be transferred to the name of another person in the same household when a person in the same household has an unpaid bill. This rule does not apply to unpaid bills undergoing a dispute procedure. It also does not apply if a person moving into a household did not live there when some unpaid power was provided.

A deposit may be required if the non-residential customer:

- Has an unpaid delinquent electric bill.
- Has an unfavorable credit rating with a credit reporting agency.
- Has tampered with or attempted to bypass company meters or equipment within the last six years.
- Has two or more shutoff notices issued within the last 12 months.
- Service has been discontinued for nonpayment.
- Has an unsatisfactory record of bill payment within the first six months after service began.

Deposits are returned promptly after a customer has paid the bills in a satisfactory manner for 12 consecutive

months. However, deposits for tampering with or attempting to bypass company meters or equipment will be retained by the company for 36 months and will be refunded upon satisfactory payment of the last 12 months of charges. Payment is not satisfactory if you pay a bill more than five days after the next month's bill is issued or after the utility issues a notice of shutoff of service for nonpayment, unless the bill is in dispute.

We will pay interest on deposits and credit interest semi-annually or upon return of deposits, whichever comes first.

## **GUARANTEES**

For residential customers, if you are unable to pay a cash deposit, there is another option. You can have another person sign a written guarantee that your utility bills will be paid. This person is called a "guarantor." The guarantor is ultimately responsible for your bills until you have a satisfactory payment record for 12 consecutive months without having to be sent a notice of shutoff of service. However, a guarantee requested because of tampering with or attempting to bypass company meters or equipment may be required for a 36-month period and will be released after satisfactory payment of the latest 12 months of charges. When these conditions are met, the guarantor is released from responsibility. The guarantor is only responsible up to the dollar amount written on the agreement.

## **DISPUTE PROCEDURES**

To dispute any matter relating to billing, deposits, or shutoff of service, call UPPCO at 906-449-2013 or 800-562-7680. We

will make every effort to resolve the problem. If you're not satisfied with our attempts or solution, you may request that the problem be reviewed by a utility hearing officer.

The utility hearing officer is employed or contracted by UPPCO for no other purpose than to listen to both sides and make fair decisions in accordance with Michigan Public Service Commission rules. The hearings and decisions are subject to review by the Michigan Public Service Commission.

If the problem concerns a pending service shutoff, we agree to suspend the shutoff pending the outcome of the hearing. If you don't appear at the hearing, service can be shut off.

If you request a hearing because of a billing dispute, you will be required to pay any amount not in dispute. If mutual agreement as to the amount that is disputed cannot be reached, you may be asked to pay 50% of the entire disputed bill, not to exceed \$100 per billing period. If you don't make the payment within 10 days of the day you request the hearing, you waive your right to an informal hearing and regular collection activity will resume.

At least two business days before the hearing, we must supply you with the names of our witnesses and copies of any documents or other data we intend to use at the hearing. You must provide the same for us.

At the hearing, you or your representative present your side of the case and ask questions of our witnesses. We are entitled to do the same.

Both sides will be testifying under oath.

We assume the burden of proof in all cases. The utility hearing officer then decides the case solely on the basis of the presented facts.

Within fifteen business days after a utility hearing officer issues a written complaint determination, either of us may file an informal appeal with the Michigan Public Service Commission.

The informal appeal is assigned to a regulation officer for review. The officer will investigate the complaint, review the utility hearing officer's decision, and may even call for a conference with both of us. The officer will decide the appeal within 30 days and send copies of the decision to both of us. Both of us will comply with the decision, but either of us may request a formal hearing with the Michigan Public Service Commission, in accordance with the commission's rules of practice and procedure. A copy of the rules can be obtained by contacting the commission.

## **SETTLEMENT AGREEMENTS**

If the utility and the residential or small nonresidential customer arrive at a mutually satisfactory settlement of a matter in dispute, the utility may offer the customer the opportunity to enter into a settlement agreement. Services shall not be shut off if the customer follows the terms of the settlement agreement.

## **SHUTOFF OF SERVICE**

At times, we have to shut off service to a customer. This happens if a customer:

- Has not paid a delinquent account that accrued within the last six years.

- Fails to pay an overdue account.
- Fails to comply with a payment plan, settlement agreement or required deposit arrangement.
- Has unauthorized use of service.
- Violates state-approved rules for use of service.
- Occupant who used electricity failed to establish service.
- Refuses the utility reasonable access to utility equipment contained on the customer's premises.

Other reasons for shutoff of service for residential customers can be because a person living in the customer's residence is both of the following: Has a delinquent account for service with us within the past three years that remains unpaid and is not in dispute; and, the customer lived in the person's residence when all or part of the debt was incurred. We may transfer a prorated amount of the debt to the customer's account, based upon the length of time the customer resided at the person's residence. This provision does not apply if the customer was a minor while living in the person's residence. A residential customer who misrepresents his/her identity to obtain service may be shut off or denied service.

Nonresidential customers may also be shut off for failure to fulfill contractual obligations for service or facilities or nonpayment of unpaid balances on any other nonresidential account incurred by the customer under a different account name by the customer's predecessor in interest, or by any other entity, the debt of which the customer is legally obligated to assume.

## **SERVICE SHUTOFF NOTIFICATION**

UPPCO is more interested in helping our customers pay their bills than in shutting off service. We make every effort to contact customers who have overdue bills.

As a rule, UPPCO will not shut off service until 10 days after a written notice is mailed. We also make at least two attempts to personally contact the customer. If a dangerous situation exists, we will shut off service without making an attempt to contact the customer. Communicating with the customer allows us to offer payment arrangements and also gives the customer an opportunity to dispute a bill if he/she feels it's incorrect.

Residential and small nonresidential customers may enter into a minimum of two payment plans for an amount owed to UPPCO that is not in dispute, if a customer claims an inability to pay in full.

In negotiating a payment plan, UPPCO will not require a residential or small nonresidential customer to pay more than a reasonable amount of the outstanding bill upon entering into the plan, and not more than reasonable installments until the remaining balance is paid.

UPPCO will consider factors in establishing a payment plan including: size of delinquent account, customer's ability to pay, the time that the debt has been outstanding, the reasons that the customer has not paid the bill, the customer's payment history and any other relevant factors concerning the circumstances of the customer.

UPPCO is not required to enter into more than two payment plans with a residential

or small nonresidential customer who defaulted on the terms and conditions of a payment plan in the last 12 months.

If a customer is seeking assistance from a social service agency, agreeing to a payment plan may prevent them from getting emergency assistance. The customer should notify UPPCO if they are working with an agency and should not agree to a payment plan that they are not satisfied with. If a customer has an unexpected loss or reduction of income after the payment plan is implemented, he or she may request a review and modification of the plan.

### **EXTREME WEATHER CONDITION POLICY**

UPPCO will have an approved weather condition policy for extreme hot and cold circumstances.

### **MEDICAL EMERGENCY & CRITICAL CARE CUSTOMERS**

Service shutoff may be postponed up to 21 days if a customer with a serious medical condition provides UPPCO with a completed commission-approved medical certification form that identifies the medical condition, any medical equipment needed, and the specific time period which the shut off would aggravate the medical emergency.

This provision covers emergencies for the customer, a family member or any permanent resident of the household. This postponement may be extended up to 63 days if verified with a doctor's statement.

If service shutoff has occurred without any postponements, service would be restored with the above statements that verify the medical emergency. The

restoration of service could continue up to 63 days. Annually, a utility is not required to grant shut-off extensions totaling more than 126 days per household.

The customer will be provided with a three business day grace period to allow time to obtain a completed form.

Critical care customers are those where interruption of service would be immediately life threatening. On an annual basis, a critical care customer shall provide the utility with an updated commission-approved medical certification form certifying his or her status as a critical care customer. The customer shall notify UPPCO if their status should change.

The customer will be provided with a three business-day grace period to allow time to obtain a completed form.

The form may be found at [www.uppco.com](http://www.uppco.com).

Nothing in this rule shall prohibit UPPCO that observes an unsafe connection at a customer's location caused by unauthorized use of electric service, from implementing measures to cure or address the unsafe connection.

## **THIRD PARTY NOTIFICATION**

When it comes to shutting off service, we work to protect customers who can't act on their own behalf. One way to do this is through our "third party notification." This service may be helpful to the elderly, ill, disabled, or those who live alone. People who are often away from home and may not receive our notices may also benefit from this service.



With the third party notification, you can name a third party (relative, friend, clergyman, or social service agency) to be notified prior to shutoff of service. They will be able to contact us and act on your behalf. They are not obligated to pay your bill, nor will it necessarily prevent shutoff if payment is not made. To designate a third party, please mail the reply coupon on the last page of this pamphlet or call 906-449-2013 or 800-562-7680 for additional information.

## **RESTORATION OF SERVICE**

UPPCO will move quickly to restore power to customers whose service has been interrupted. In fact, as soon as the cause of the shutoff has been resolved, UPPCO will attempt to restore service within one business day from when the request is received. A reconnection fee will be billed to your account.

## **DATA PRIVACY**

UPPCO must have a customer data privacy procedure in place to assure personal information will not be distributed to third parties without a customer's knowledge and consent.

## **VOLUNTARY TERMINATION OF SERVICE**

When you move, or no longer need service from UPPCO, please follow the steps below:

- Contact us by phone, fax, web or mail at least 10 days prior to the requested service termination date.

- Allow access to perform a final meter read, if necessary.
- Provide an address for final billing at the time of request for a final meter read.

UPPCO will promptly read your meter and issue your final bill.

# Request for Third-Party Notification

Please print

Please return to UPPCO: Email: [customerservice@upppo.com](mailto:customerservice@upppo.com)

Fax: 906-485-2431

Mail: 500 N. Washington Street, Ishpeming, MI 49849

Customer Name:	Name of Third Party:
Customer Address:	Third Party Relationship to Customer:
Customer Account Number:	Third Party Address:
Customer Daytime Phone:	Third Party Daytime Phone:
Customer Signature:	Third Party Signature:
Date:	Date:

*NOTE: Request for Third-Party Notification must be signed by the customer and the third party or provide Power of Attorney paperwork with form.*

