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# Washington urges people with overdue utility bills to get help before shutoff moratorium ends Sept. 30

*Author: Ted Land*

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SEATTLE — Washington's emergency pandemic order preventing utility companies from shutting off water, electricity and natural gas services for customers [ends Sept. 30](#).

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"Right now, because of COVID, we have more assistance than ever to give," said Lucy Pyeatt, director of energy and financial assistance programs for the nonprofit organization [Hopelink](#).

Pyeatt said eligible households could apply for up to \$2,500

in government assistance to pay their bills. She said customers were previously capped at about \$1,000.

"This is an ongoing need, and we certainly have seen that the need has escalated over these past two years," said Pyeatt.

Some of the state's private utility providers have their own assistance programs. Customers should contact their provider to see what help is available.

Pyeatt said if someone is seeking assistance, utilities cannot shut off their water, electricity, or gas, even after the moratorium ends.

"As long as you have an appointment, the utility companies will know, even if it's several weeks in the future, that you're working towards assistance, you're working towards seeing what your options are," explained Pyeatt.

Customers can get money for current and future bills, Pyeatt said.

The state has a [website to help customers](#) start finding financial aid. People can also call 211 to learn more about local assistance programs.