

Public Utilities Commission
P.O. Box 1088
Salem, OR 97308-1088
Attention: Lisa Hardie
 John Savage
 Stephen Bloom

September 22, 2016

Regarding: AR-601 – Severe Weather Moratorium

Dear Commissioners:

Summer temperatures can reach 100 degrees. Many people don't have air conditioners and have no place to go where it's cool. This can cause them to have a heat stroke. Studies show that heat waves are responsible for ten times as many deaths as hurricanes, floods, lightning, rainstorm as and tornadoes combined.

Winter temperatures can get as low as 40 degrees. If people don't have heat, they can freeze to death. People can't afford to pay their heating bills because it costs too much. According to the Center for Disease, among the elderly and other vulnerable groupings, hypothermia can occur in temperatures as high as 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

Being a volunteer with Jackson County Fuel Committee, I helped people find ways to keep their utilities on. Of the 143 people who have come to us this year with shutoff notices – or utilities already shut off – 63% had at least one disabled people in the house and over half had children in the house.

Just a few minutes ago, I took a phone call from a disabled person with no income whose gas has been off since last winter.

With regard to the specific question of whether there are other circumstances under which a moratorium should be put into effect:

A year-round moratorium for anyone who cannot pay a bill due to financial circumstances beyond his or her control, including but not limited to unemployment, medical bills, death of a spouse or partner, etc., would be appropriate. I lost a job ten years ago. Because of financial problems, my lights were turned off for three days. Since I have been volunteering with JCFC, I see people experiencing the same problem or worse. This moratorium should include all utilities.

