



COVID-19 and Energy Efficiency Program
Continuity

MEEA Staff
May 14, 2020



State of the Midwest

Stay-at-home orders

Widespread customer protection actions

Utility program suspensions

Midwest State-Level Customer Protection Actions

State	Description	Type	Utility Types
IA	Suspend utility shut-offs	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Water
IL	Suspend utility shut-offs & late fees	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Sewer, Water
IN	Suspend utility shut-offs	Executive Order	Electric, Gas, Sewer, Water, Communications
KS	Suspend utility shut-offs	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Water, Communications
KY	Suspend utility shut-offs	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Water, Sewer, Communications
MI	Order for water reconnects	Executive Order	Water
MN	Request utilities take customer protection actions	Commission Request	Electric, Gas, Communications
MO	Approve utility reconnect & late fee tariff variances	Commission Order	Electric, Gas
	Utilities voluntarily suspend utility shut-offs, late fees	Voluntary	Electric, Gas
ND	<i>No specific actions</i>		
NE	Allow reimbursement for low-income broadband services	Commission Order	Communications
OH	Extend winter disconnect order	Commission Order	Electric, Gas
	Orders utility review disconnect policies	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Sewer, Water
	Orders water reconnects, suspend shut-offs & disconnects	Legislation	Water
SD	<i>No specific actions</i>		
WI	Commission investigation to ensure services	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Water
	Suspend shut-offs & require reconnects	Commission Order	Electric, Gas, Water

Source: [NARUC State Response Tracker](#)

Midwest Regulatory Procedures Changes

State	Commission	Best COVID Info Page	Description of Changes	Office Open to Public	Staff Remote
IA	IUB	news page	streaming meetings, encourage electronic docket commenting	yes	unclear
IL	ICC	COVID info page	streaming meetings	no	yes
IN	IURC	homepage	waive paper filing requirements, waive notarized signature requirements, streaming meetings & conferences, extended timelines	no	yes
KS	KCC	COVID info page	streaming meetings	no	yes
KY	KY PSC	homepage	suspend paper filings, encourage converting non-electronic cases, delay routine reporting, extend filing deadlines, streaming meetings & conferences	no	yes
MI	MPSC	COVID info page	streaming meetings & hearings, postpone smaller meetings, public comments by email	no	yes
MN	MN PUC	news page	suspend all public meetings, encourage electronic commenting on open comment periods	unclear	yes
MO	MO PSC	COVID info page	streaming meetings & hearings	no	unclear
ND	ND PSC	homepage	streaming meetings, limited size in-person meetings	by appt	unclear
NE	NE PSC	COVID info page	streaming meetings; allow some approvals without quorum	no	unclear
OH	PUCO	homepage	minimal staffing levels, online contact form	unclear	unclear
SD	SD PUC	homepage	dial-in for meetings	no	yes
WI	PSC of WI	homepage	extend some filing deadlines	unclear	unclear

State Regulator COVID Info Pages

State	Commission	Best COVID-related Info Page
IA	IUB	news page
IL	ICC	COVID info page
IN	IURC	homepage
KS	KCC	COVID info page
KY	KY PSC	homepage
MI	MPSC	COVID info page
MN	MN PUC	news page
MO	MO PSC	COVID info page
ND	ND PSC	homepage
NE	NE PSC	COVID info page
OH	PUCO	homepage
SD	SD PUC	homepage
WI	PSC of WI	homepage

EE Regulatory Response

Michigan PSC Response

MPSC Order- April 15

- Suspending disconnections for Michigan's most vulnerable populations, low-income and senior customers, through June 1, and waiving late fees for eligible low-income customers receiving energy assistance.
- Allowing for customers exposed to, infected by or quarantined because of COVID-19 to be eligible for a 30-day medical hold to avoid a disconnection of service.
- Waiving deposits and reconnection fees for low-income customers, seniors and customers experiencing financial hardship related to COVID-19 and seeking restoration of electric or gas service.
- Extending access to and availability of flexible payment plans to customers financially impacted by COVID-19 and providing customer assistance personnel with the resources necessary to connect customers to available financial assistance and social service agencies.

Program Impacts

Statewide EE collaboratives

General/widespread responses

Changes to programs that are still running

Impacts on MEEA members

Statewide EE Collaboratives

Peer Information Sharing About EE Continuity

27 Mar.

MI EWR Collaborative

- Utility program impacts & updates discussion
- Discussion of impacts on research, evaluation, TRM update schedules
- Limited guidance from staff so far on performance metrics
- Meetings ongoing

30 Apr.

MO EE Low Income Work Group (MEEAC)

- Meeting cancelled
- Low-Income Workgroup met to address energy assistance and energy efficiency program continuity

IL Stakeholder Advisory Group (IL SAG)

- Utility impacts review
- Discussion of ideas for program changes and innovations
- Identify topics for further SAG discussion
 - Group coordination of responses
 - Consensus on priorities
- Income Qualified Advisory Group also met



14 Apr.

Utility Program Suspensions

Most of the Midwest's utilities have suspended at least some EE programs as a result of the COVID virus

Focus on
worker &
customer safety

In accordance
with state stay-
at-home orders

Suspension of
customer-
contact
programs

Some
continuation of
no-contact
programs

Utility Energy Efficiency Programs

General/Common Responses by Midwest Utilities Under First Weeks of Stay-at-Home

Suspend customer-contact programs

- Audit & direct install
- Appliance recycling
- Outreach events
- Field inspection, QA/QC
- Some C&I installs continuing depending on state/utility

Continue no-contact programs

- Rebate processing
- Online marketplace
- Home energy reports & behavior programs
- Multifamily common areas/equipment room

Program Changes for Continued Operation

In Places Where Field Programs are Still Operating

Some utilities are still operating C&I install programs

- Most residential field programs have been suspended
- Call volumes & project pipelines still seeing steady rates right now, though some of the projects are wrapping up and new ones are being scheduled for later in the year so there may be a gap
- Many of the installs are happening at contractor discretion and may be tapering off as health & safety concerns grow

Good practices being used to reduce risks in field

- PPE & safe contact procedures for operating field crews (IL utilities)
- Allow for virtual inspection/proof of installation

Residential Programs

Income-qualified programs

Low-income programs suspended

- Stay-at-home
 - Worker & customer safety issues
 - More energy usage
 - Lost wages, debt accrual, need for energy assistance
- Weatherization work suspended
- Potential for innovation

Michigan Programmatic Impacts

Utility Reports

EWR Low Income Workgroup- May 1

- Group heard presentations from DTE, Consumers, UPPCO, Indiana Michigan Power Company, and SEMCO
- Heard similar themes to what MEEA has seen throughout the Midwest
 - Accepting applications for future appointments
 - Virtual/curbside consultations
 - Kits for IQ and COVID-impacted customers
 - Changes in marketing
 - Hope to relaunch direct installs soon

Workforce Impacts at MEEA Members

What We Have Heard About Program Staff in Stay-at-Home States

Job Changes

- Remote work
- Furloughs
- Layoffs
- Salary reductions
- Staff reassignment

- Nationally, 70,000 EE jobs lost in March (E2)
- Small businesses
- Residential workers hit hardest

Post-COVID-19

Official guidance

Workforce readiness

Program innovation

Official Guidance

What do we need from **governors & state/federal agencies?**



The green light

- Lifted stay-at-home orders
- Determination of services that could be provided under “essential” status



Health & safety protocols for workforce

- From CDC and/or OSHA, state health departments
- Uniform, statewide or nationwide standards & training materials



Address liability issues

- How can utilities/contractors be protected from the risks associated with worker or customers becoming infected?

What else?

EE Executive Response

Massachusetts 3/31 essential services order includes EE

COVID-19 Order No. 21

- Mass. Governor updated his essential services list to include [energy efficiency](#)
- Only state to list EE as essential service (that we're aware of)
- EE projects don't need to receive specific authorization to resume work when it's safe
- Program administrators suspended non-essential work, formed a contractor mitigation working group

Official Guidance

What do we need from **regulators**?



Approval of program changes

- Altered field protocols like virtual inspections & verifications
- Updated EM&V plans



Guidance on programs & portfolios

- Reallocation or roll-over of unspent budgets
- Reporting missed targets
- Performance incentives & LRAM reconciliation



Timelines & requirements

- Alterations to filing deadlines for reports & plans
- Guidance on meeting public participation requirements

What else?

EE and the Regulatory Response

Michigan 4/15 COVID order includes EE

Order in Case U-20757

- Broad order on operation and continuity of service issues from COVID-19
- **First COVID-related order in the Midwest to directly address EE programs**
- Instructs energy providers to coordinate with MPSC staff and stakeholders to develop continuity plans for meeting energy and demand saving targets even as social distancing limits the ability of workers to interact with customers through energy waste reduction and demand response programs;
- Staff will file an update by July 15 on efforts

Michigan 4/15 COVID order includes EE

Michigan PSC Staff Report

Order in Case U-20757

- PSC Staff needs stakeholder feedback
- Low Income Work Group needs to be a part of the solution
 - “The Commission looks forward to continued dialogue among a broad range of organizations on program design, implementation, and outreach through the Staff’s low-income workgroup.”
 - “Identify best practices for continuing to serve low- to moderate-income households, including those impacted directly by COVID-19, and related outreach.”
- What are the impacts?
- What can Staff do?

Policy Response in Non-MEEA States

Notable Regulatory Actions in Other Regions

California PUC

- March 23 [executive director letter](#) to utilities requesting advance payment of 30 days to Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) program contractors
- [April 7 follow-up](#): of 78 contractors, 51% accepted offers, 34% declined, and 15% suggested alternative proposals

Connecticut PURA

- Expanded scope of [energy affordability investigation](#) to include C&I customers

Workforce Readiness

What do we need to get **back into homes & businesses?**



Develop new protocols for field staff

Necessary PPE, along with training & safety protocols

Talking to homeowners about safety

Virtual inspection / verification methods

Protocols for no-contact installs



Retain skilled workforce

Shift staff to planning & analysis tasks

Online training to increase skills (e.g. building performance, use of equipment, installation practices, certifications, even defensive driving...)



Get ready for onboarding

Develop fast-boot trainings to bring new hires up to readiness for field operations rapidly

What else?

Program Innovation in a Time of Isolation

What are utilities & implementers doing right now?

Emphasize no-touch programs

Behavior programs
Online marketplaces
Online self-audits
"Virtual Treasure Hunt" in SEM program (ComEd)

Support self-installation

"Handyman hotline" through community partner (Ameren Illinois)
Bulk delivery of measures to property managers
Photo verification of installs
How-to videos

Marketing changes

Recommend EE tips that don't require trips to the store or having someone into the home
Customer segment-specific webinars

Community support

Low-income & other vulnerable populations

What else?

Program Innovation in a Time of Isolation

Expanding Our Efforts to Bring Back Programs



Find opportunities for lower risk installs and retrofits

Empty commercial buildings & schools
No-contact exterior installs
Would need clearance to work, safety procedures, PPE first



Shift more activities online

Training & education programs that have traditionally been offered in-person
Expand/launch marketplaces
Develop & approve procedures for virtual inspections, QA/QC



Demonstrate the value for community recovery

Position EE as an economic recovery tool
Target program funding & outreach to low-income programs
Target hiring efforts from hardest hit communities

What else?

What Are Your Responses?

We Need Information to Help Support Our Industry

Please share your business & program impacts

- Interested in impacts at utility, implementation contractor, evaluator & other businesses
 - Workforce changes
 - Suspended programs
 - Remaining active programs
 - Program changes

Email us

covidimpacts@mwalliance.org



Thank you!

Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance

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