



Media Release

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Useful Consumer Tips in the Event of Extreme Summer Weather

For starters, Georgia Power cannot cut off power during extreme heat waves

Atlanta, GA --- Georgia will be getting its first taste of extreme heat tomorrow and consumers, especially the elderly, sick and the very young - those most vulnerable when temperatures rise - should keep in mind a few basic summertime tips in the event of sweltering temperatures.

State-regulated Georgia Power is not allowed to disconnect residential electric service for an unpaid bill if, prior to 8 a.m. on the date of the scheduled disconnection, a National Weather Service Heat Advisory or Excessive Heat Warning is in effect, or is forecasted to be in effect.

In other words, if the forecasted high temperature is above 97 degrees or the heat index is forecasted at 110 degrees or higher, Georgia Power cannot legally cut off a customer's power due to late payment.

The protective rule has been in effect since January 2009 and is part of the Public Service Commission's seasonal restrictions, which also includes a ban on disconnections during winter months when temperatures fall below 32 degrees.

The National Weather Service is expected to issue a heat advisory tomorrow, with temperatures projected in the high 90s.

Georgia Watch Executive Director Angela Speir Phelps, who proposed the protective rule when she served as a Commissioner on the Public Service Commission, says it is absolutely vital that the most vulnerable Georgians are protected in the event of extreme heat.

"Customers across the state should remember that Georgia Power cannot disconnect them on the hottest days. They are protected from shutoffs during the harshest days of summer," says Speir Phelps. "It's also important for us to keep an eye on neighbors to make sure they're not suffering without air conditioning during the extreme heat."

In 2007, a two-week heat wave throughout the Southeast claimed the lives of more than 40 people.

Studies by the Centers for Disease Control and the Environmental Protection Administration show that a heat index of 105 degrees can be life threatening. Urban areas, in particular, are at risk of "heat islands" whereby heat is trapped for days after a sudden spike in temperature. This effect can cause severe dehydration and wear down the body's defenses.

Georgia Watch Consumer Energy Director Clare McGuire says as the weather gets warmer and more energy is needed, consumers should keep in mind some basic energy saving tips so bills don't get out of hand.

"Try and keep your thermostat to 78 degrees, or the warmest temperature you can tolerate; use ceiling fans or portable fans to help cool the rooms you spend a lot of time in; clean or replace air filters on a regular basis; and turn off window air conditioners when you will be away for several hours," says McGuire.

McGuire adds that there are number of smart ways Georgians can cut down on utility bills:



- **Weatherize your home or apartment, using caulk and weather stripping to seal air leaks around doors and windows**
- **If you're not using an appliance, unplug it**
- **Keep curtains and shades closed during the day**
- **Use heat-producing appliances like the oven, the dishwasher and the clothes dryer at night, since temperatures can drop drastically after sundown. Take advantage of the cooler evening temperatures**
- **Replace incandescent bulbs with LED or compact fluorescent bulbs**

If you have any questions about ways to save on energy bills or about the PSC extreme weather rule, consumers can contact Georgia Watch or the Georgia Public Service Commission.

Founded in 2002, Georgia Watch is a nonprofit, nonpartisan 501-(c)(3) watchdog group focusing on consumer education and research in the areas of health care, insurance, identity theft, consumer energy issues and personal finance. For more information, call Georgia Watch at 404-525-1085, or visit us at www.georgiawatch.org.