

Utilities While Renting

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What utilities am I responsible for paying in addition to rent?

Before signing a rental agreement or making any payments, landlords must tell tenants which utilities they are responsible for. This includes utilities for the apartment and any shared utilities in common areas like hallways, yards, parking lots, and laundry rooms.

If you are having trouble paying your utilities you can reach out to the State of Wisconsin Division of Energy, Housing and Community Resources by phone at 866-432-8947 or visit their [website](#).

Am I responsible for utilities in my unit after I move out?

No, as long as you cancel your utility service with the utility company when you move out, you are no longer responsible for paying the utility bill for the unit. Once you stop using utilities in your rental place and move out, the utility company has to figure out who's responsible for paying for the service next. If they can't figure it out, they can tell the landlord in writing that the landlord has to pay for it. Then, it's up to the landlord to figure out who's living in the rental place and make sure they pay for the utilities.

How can I determine if I'm paying for someone else's utilities?

If you suspect you are paying for someone else's utilities, you can request copies of previous bills from the utility company. They can then estimate the amount the landlord should refund you based on this information. Write to your landlord asking

for a refund and include copies of the estimates from the utility company. If the landlord does not respond, you can file a complaint with [Consumer Protection](#) and/or seek assistance from a legal aid provider.

What if the landlord did not disclose utility information?

If utility information was not disclosed, you can contact the local utility company for assistance. A service person may visit the property to determine which services you should be paying for.

What if I have a shared meter that was not disclosed?

If you discover you have a shared meter that was not disclosed, you should first write a letter to the landlord requesting a refund and set a deadline for response (usually ten days to two weeks). If the landlord does not respond, you can file a complaint with [Consumer Protection](#) and/or seek assistance from a legal aid provider.

What if my utilities are shared with other places and the lease doesn't state who is to pay?

If the rental place shares utilities with other places and it's not clear who should pay, the landlord has to pay. So, even if the rental agreement doesn't specify who should pay, if utilities are shared, the landlord has to cover the bill. If the landlord wants you to be responsible for heat, water, or electricity, it must be specified in your rental agreement.

What if we cannot reach an agreement with the landlord?

If tenants and landlords are unable to reach an agreement, mediation may be helpful. Tenants can contact the Housing Mediation Service in Dane County or the Wisconsin Association of Mediators outside of Dane County. If the landlord still does not comply, tenants may sue in Small Claims Court for mandatory double damages plus court costs and reasonable attorney's fees.

Can I be evicted for not paying utilities?

Yes and no. If your rental agreement makes you responsible for paying them, failure to pay could lead to an eviction. If you are not responsible for utilities, a landlord cannot evict you for failing to pay for them.

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