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from Hour Project

# My Landlord Shut Off My Utilities!

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- ❖ **COVID-19 Update! Eviction law is changing quickly. There are temporary bans and changes to how courts handle evictions. Things may be different depending on where you live.** Get the latest information and learn about help for evictions in your area at WashingtonLawHelp.org: [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): There are only a few reasons your landlord can evict you right now](#)
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## Who is this for?

A tenant in Washington state whose landlord just shut off their utilities to try to force them to move.

## What will you learn by reading it?

- What to do if your landlord illegally shuts off your utilities.
- Where to get legal help.

## What does the law say?

[RCW 59.18.300](#) states that it is unlawful for a landlord to intentionally (on purpose) shut off utility service. This includes water, heat, electricity, or gas, except temporarily to make needed repairs.

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- ❖ Washington's state laws are called the **Revised Code of Washington (RCW)**. The most important laws affecting tenants and landlords are in the [Residential Landlord-Tenant Act \(RCW 59.18\)](#).
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In other words, it is illegal for a landlord to cut your utilities just to try to make you leave.

You can sue the landlord later (usually in Small Claims Court) for any financial damage you suffered because you were locked out. You can also sue for \$100 per day that you did not have utilities. Read [What is Small Claims Court?](#) and [How do I Sue in Small Claims Court?](#)

## **Can a landlord ever legally cut the utilities?**

Maybe. If your lease states that you were supposed to pay the utilities, but you did not, the utility company might shut off the utilities.

If you have “**abandoned**” the place—you left the rental unit and stopped paying rent without telling the landlord – the landlord may shut off the utilities.

## **What can you do if your landlord shuts off the utilities?**

Call the sheriff. Let them know your landlord shut off your utilities without a judge’s order. The sheriff may come out and make the landlord turn the utilities back on.

Then try to get legal help.

## **Get Legal Help**

Eviction laws and the ways courts are handling the COVID-19 crisis may change quickly and be different depending on where you live. Get the latest information and learn about help for evictions in your area on [WashingtonLawHelp.org](http://WashingtonLawHelp.org).

**Outside King County:** Call the CLEAR Hotline at 1-888-201-1014 weekdays between 9:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.

**In King County:** Call 2-1-1 for referral to a legal services provider weekdays between 8:00 am – 6:00 pm.

**Persons 60 and Over** can call CLEAR\*Sr at 1-888-387-7111 (statewide).

**Deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired callers** can call CLEAR or 211 (or toll-free 1-877-211-9274) using a relay service of your choice.



Washington  
LawHelp

www.WashingtonLawHelp.org

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Apply online with **CLEAR\*Online** - [nwjustice.org/get-legal-help](https://nwjustice.org/get-legal-help)

CLEAR and 211 will provide a free interpreter.

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