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Renters' Rights in Tennessee: Utilities - HELP4TN Blog

As the temperatures drop in the winter and become unpredictable in the spring, it is important to know your rights, responsibilities, and safety tips when it comes to your utilities and utility bill. “Utilities” can mean your light, heat, electricity, and water. You may think of air conditioning when you hear “utility,” but in Tennessee landlords are not required to provide air unless your lease says so.

What do I need to get my utilities on?

If you have just moved to a new place, you will need to make sure your utilities are on. Your lease should say if you or the landlord will pay for the utilities. You probably don't need to do anything if it says in the lease that the landlord will pay for the utilities. If it doesn't say that the landlord will pay for the utilities or you own the place, then you need to call the utility company to get the bill put in your name. Typically, you will have to apply and the company will run a credit check. They may ask for your Social Security number to do that. If you have bad credit, the company might make you pay a deposit to get the utility turned on.

Can my landlord shut off my utilities?

No, the landlord can not shut off essential utilities under Tennessee law. If the place has a heater, the landlord must make sure it works and is safe. Additionally, the landlord is responsible for making sure the electric wiring is safe. If a water pipe bursts, that is also the responsibility of the landlord to fix. You can learn more about your rights as a tenant on [HELP4TN's Landlord-Tenant page](#).

Is there help if I can't afford to pay my utility bill?

There are some groups across Tennessee that help with utility bills. You can see this list by learning more about [Utility Bill Assistance](#) or visiting HELP4TN's [Utilities](#) page. You can also try talking to the utility company to set up a payment plan. They do not have to offer a payment plan, but most do.

HELP4TN Blog posts are written by TALS staff attorneys. This blog is not legal advice, but it is legal information to help you learn about your rights. If you have questions about this blog or about your legal situation, you can talk to a lawyer for free at 1-844-HELP4TN (1-844-435-7486).

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