SENATE, No. 1805

STATE OF NEW JERSEY

221st LEGISLATURE

PRE-FILED FOR INTRODUCTION IN THE 2024 SESSION

Sponsored by:
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SYNOPSIS

Requires electric public utility to reimburse customers for up to $500 for spoiled food and full cost of spoiled medicine resulting from lengthy service outage following major event.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

Introduced Pending Technical Review by Legislative Counsel.

AN ACT concerning reimbursement for certain costs resulting from a sustained electric public utility service outage and supplementing Title 48 of the Revised Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

1. a. Beginning 90 days after the effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill), an electric public utility shall reimburse a residential customer who experienced a sustained interruption in electric service for any food or medication that spoiled or was compromised due to lack of refrigeration caused by the sustained interruption.

b. The reimbursement, pursuant to subsection a. of this section, shall be of an amount:

(1) up to $500 for the amount paid for the food that spoiled. For any reimbursement request over $250, a customer shall provide to the utility an itemized list of the spoiled food and proof of purchase, including an itemized receipt; and

(2) equal to the full cost of the amount paid for the medication that was compromised. For any reimbursement request over $500, a customer shall provide to the utility an itemized list of the compromised medication and proof of purchase, including an itemized receipt.

c. No later than 90 days after the effective date of P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill), each electric public utility in the State shall develop and implement a system for customers of the utility to apply for a reimbursement online through the utility's Internet website. Applications for reimbursement shall be made in a form and manner as determined by the board. An electric public utility shall reimburse a customer no later 30 days after receipt of a customer's request.

d. Any costs incurred by an electric public utility pursuant to P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill) shall not be recoverable from ratepayers of the utility.

e. The board shall, pursuant to the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), adopt rules and regulations necessary for the implementation of this section.

f. As used in P.L. , c. (C.) (pending before the Legislature as this bill):

"Board" means the Board of Public Utilities or any successor agency.

"Electric public utility" or "utility" means a public utility, as that term is defined in R.S.48:2-13, that provides electric distribution service in this State.

"Major event" means an occurrence arising from conditions beyond the control of an electric public utility that affect the operation of an electric public utility's distribution system,

including, but not limited to, a thunderstorm, tornado, hurricane, flood, heat wave, snow storm, ice storm, earthquake, terrorist attack, or any other condition that the board determines, which results in a sustained interruption of utility service.

"Sustained interruption" means the cessation of electric public utility service to one or more customers lasting more than 72 consecutive hours after the conclusion of a major event where the electric public utility service cessation was caused by that major event.

2. This act shall take effect immediately.

STATEMENT

This bill requires an electric public utility (utility) to reimburse a residential customer (customer) who experienced a "sustained interruption" caused by a "major event," as those terms are defined in the bill, for certain costs of spoiled food and medication, due to the lack of refrigeration during the sustained interruption, upon the customer filing a claim for the loss in a form and manner established by the Board of Public Utilities (BPU). Under the bill, a customer that experiences a sustained interruption may be reimbursed up to $500 for the amount paid for the food that spoiled. For any reimbursement request over $250, a customer is to provide to the utility an itemized list of the spoiled food and proof of purchase, including an itemized receipt. A customer that experiences a sustained interruption may be reimbursed for the full cost of the amount paid for the medication that was compromised. For any reimbursement request over $500, a customer is to provide to the utility an itemized list of the compromised medication and proof of purchase, including an itemized receipt.

No later than 90 days after the effective date of the bill, each utility in the State is required to develop and implement a system for customers of the utility to apply for a reimbursement online via the utility's Internet website. Applications for a reimbursement are to be made in a form and manner as determined by the BPU and customers are to be reimbursed no later than 30 days after a utility's receipt of a reimbursement request.

The bill prohibits any costs incurred by a utility pursuant to the bill to be recoverable from ratepayers of the utility.