

§ 14-151. Interfering with gas, electric, and steam appliances or meters; penalties.

(a) It is unlawful for any person to willfully, with intent to injure or defraud, commit any of the following acts:

- (1) Connect a tube, pipe, wire, or other instrument or contrivance with a pipe or wire used for conducting or supplying illuminating gas, fuel, natural gas, or electricity in such a manner as to supply the gas or electricity to any burner, orifice, lamp, or motor where the gas or electricity is or can be burned or used without passing through the meter or other instrument provided for registering the quantity consumed.
- (2) Obstruct, alter, bypass, tamper with, injure, or prevent the action of a meter or other instrument used to measure or register the quantity of illuminating fuel, natural gas, water, or electricity passing through the meter by a person other than an employee of the company owning or supplying any gas, water, or electric meter, who willfully detaches or disconnects the meter, or makes or reports any test of, or examines for the purpose of testing any meter so detached or disconnected.
- (3) In any manner whatever change, extend, or alter any service or other pipe, wire, or attachment of any kind, connecting with or through which natural or artificial gas or electricity is furnished from the gas mains or pipes of any person, without first procuring from the person written permission to make the change, extension, or alterations.
- (4) Make any connection or reconnection with the gas mains, water pipes, service pipes, or wires of any person, furnishing to consumers natural or artificial gas, water, or electricity, or turn on or off or in any manner interfere with any valve or stopcock or other appliance belonging to that person, and connected with the person's service or other pipes or wires, or enlarge the orifices of mixers, or use natural gas for heating purposes except through mixers, or electricity for any purpose without first procuring from the person a written permit to turn on or off the stopcock or valve, or to make the connection or reconnections, or to enlarge the orifice of mixers, or to use for heating purposes without mixers, or to interfere with the valves, stopcocks, wires, or other appliances of them, as the case may be.
- (5) Retain possession of or refuse to deliver any mixer, meter, lamp, or other appliance which may be leased or rented by any person, for the purpose of furnishing gas, water, electricity, or power through the appliance, or sell, lend, or in any other manner dispose of the appliance to any person other than the person entitled to the possession of the appliance.
- (6) Set on fire any gas escaping from wells, broken or leaking mains, pipes, valves, or other appliances used by any person in conveying gas to consumers, or interfere in any manner with the wells, pipes, mains, gateboxes, valves, stopcocks, wires, cables, conduits, or any other appliances, machinery, or property of any person engaged in furnishing gas to consumers unless employed by or acting under the authority and direction of that person.
- (7) Open or cause to be opened, or reconnect or cause to be reconnected any valve lawfully closed or disconnected by a district steam corporation.
- (8) Turn on steam or cause it to be turned on or to reenter any premises when the steam has been lawfully stopped from entering the premises.
- (9) Reconnect electricity, gas, or water connections or otherwise turn back on one or more of those utilities when they have been lawfully disconnected or turned off by the provider of the utility.

(10) Alter, bypass, interfere with, or cut off any load management device, equipment, or system which has been installed by the electricity supplier for the purpose of limiting the use of electricity at peak-load periods. However, if there has been a written request to remove the load management device, equipment, or system to the electric supplier and the electric supplier has not removed the device within two working days, there is no violation of this section.

(b) Any meter or service entrance facility found to have been altered, tampered with, or bypassed in a manner that would cause the meter to inaccurately measure and register the electricity, gas, or water consumed or which would cause the electricity, gas, or water to be diverted from the recording apparatus of the meter is prima facie evidence of intent to violate and of the violation of this section by the person in whose name the meter is installed or the person or persons so using or receiving the benefits of the unmetered, unregistered, or diverted electricity, gas, or water.

(c) For the purposes of this section, the term "gas" means all types and forms of gas, including, but not limited to, natural gas.

(d) Criminal violations of this section are punishable as follows:

(1) A violation of this section is a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(2) A second or subsequent violation of this section is a Class H felony.

(3) A violation of this section that results in significant property damage or public endangerment is a Class F felony.

(4) Unless the conduct is covered under some other provision of law providing greater punishment, a violation that results in the death of another is a Class D felony.

(e) Whoever is found in a civil action to have violated any provision of this section is liable to the electric, gas, or water supplier in triple the amount of losses and damages sustained or five thousand dollars (\$5,000), whichever is greater.

(f) Nothing in this section applies to licensed contractors while performing usual and ordinary services in accordance with recognized customs and standards. (1901, c. 735; Rev., s. 3666; C.S., s. 4323; 1993, c. 539, s. 88; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 2013-88, s. 1; 2018-142, s. 2(a).)