

# Utilities to shut off at Big Country Chateau apartments

Tenants at the Big Country Chateau apartments are in distress due to shutoff notices on their doors which said their electricity will get cut in two weeks.

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LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Some tenants at the Big Country Chateau apartments are having déjà vu after utility shutoff notices were placed on their doors for the second time in six months.

On Monday, Entergy told tenants that they have two weeks before their electricity gets cut. This follows a notice they received from Central Arkansas Water last week, alerting them of a water shutoff scheduled for March.

Phillip Harris, a resident at the Big Country Chateau apartments shared that he lives with bugs, a hole in his sink, and his ceiling. He also said there is what looks to be mold in his closet that management won't fix.

"A lot of times I have water coming from somewhere. I don't know where it's coming from and we have to walk through," Harris said.

Though that's not his only concern.

"I don't know what I'm going to do if we have to move because I'm not working right now. I'm disabled," Harris added.

Plans to move follow a water shutoff scheduled for March, and an electricity shutoff set for February 6th.

Entergy explained that bills haven't been paid— and when we reached out, Central Arkansas Water said, "It is our hope that management works with CAW to resolve the situation and prevent the shutoff from occurring."

Harris explained that those utilities are supposed to be included in the lease.

"Pay your rent, and they're supposed to pay the lights in the water," he said.

The apartments had a similar situation last summer. The bills were paid in time to keep utilities running, but it prompted a code enforcement check and a lawsuit from Leslie Rutledge over living conditions.

Housing Subject Area Manager at the Center for Arkansas Legal Services, Kendall Lewellen, said that tenants aren't out of options.

"If a landlord and a tenant have a contract, which most people would call a lease, in which the landlord agrees to provide water, and then the landlord does not provide water, that would be a breach or a violation of that contract," Lewellen explained.

Arkansas Renters United, a renter advocacy group, shared that they've been doing what they can to support tenants, even going door to door offering advice.

"To walk in and see someone to mow and the conditions that are seen in these houses, there's no way that anybody should have to live like this. And I wouldn't want anybody to live like this," group organizer Crystal Alexander said.



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Over the summer a judge said the issue was urgent, but the complex still has open cases for code violations that date all the way back to 2019.

So while the issues are stuck in court, residents like Phillip Harris are still panicked.

"No lights. No-- no water. Gonna have to go," Harris said.

We reached out to management at Big Country a few times over the last week, but have not heard back.

When we visited the complex Monday— there was a notice on the office door still up since Thanksgiving. Residents explained that they haven't seen or heard from management in months.

Some tenants admit to not paying rent which is something management said caused the overdue bills last summer.

Though many residents have said they're withholding the money until their living conditions improve. They're hoping for the promises Big Country's owners spoke about the last time this happened— things like improved security.

Apex Equity Group, the property company that owns Big Country Chateau reportedly has millions of dollars in assets. Those include some apartments in Arkansas and across the country.

Some of those other apartment complexes have reported similar issues.

*Arkansas Legal Services can provide free counsel through their hotline (501) 376-3423.*