News

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Minnesotans to receive $106 million in federal funds for heating assistance this winter

Income-eligible Minnesotans encouraged to apply for Energy Assistance Program

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For Immediate Release, November 12, 2020

Minnesotans who have difficulty paying their heating bills are encouraged to apply for the Energy Assistance Program, especially households with seniors, small children, people with disabilities, veterans and those experiencing unemployment or financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. To get help, call 800-657-3710 and press 1, visit the Commerce Department's Energy Assistance Program webpage (https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/) or search for "energy assistance" at mn.gov/commerce (https://mn.gov/commerce/) for energy assistance information.

$106 million will help Minnesotans stay warm this winter

The Minnesota Department of Commerce announced this week that the state's Energy Assistance Program is receiving more than $106 million ($106,133,440) in federal funding to help income-eligible Minnesotans pay their heating bills this winter. The funds from the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) reduce home heating costs by making payments directly to utility companies and heating fuel vendors on behalf of eligible Minnesota homeowners and renters.

"Heating your home is a necessity in Minnesota, and no one's health or safety should be at risk because they cannot afford to stay warm," said Department of Commerce Temporary Commissioner Grace Arnold, whose agency administers the Energy Assistance Program in partnership

with 29 local service providers throughout the state. **"The Minnesota Energy Assistance Program is available to help Minnesotans pay for home heating costs, repairs and fuel delivery."**

Energy assistance is available for homeowners and renters who earn less than 50 percent of the state's median income ($54,357 for a family of four). Last year the program served nearly 118,000 Minnesota households, with an average grant of approximately $500. Some households also received help to address no-heat crisis situations or repair broken heating systems.

"The Energy Assistance Program can help those who are behind on their energy bills pay for heating, fuel delivery or furnace repairs," said Temporary Commerce Commissioner Arnold. **"I encourage all Minnesotans—especially households with seniors, small children, people with disabilities, veterans and those struggling to make ends meet due to the COVID-19 pandemic—to see if they qualify for the program."**

Energy Assistance Program key facts

Renters and homeowners are eligible.

- Assets such as the value of your home are not considered in determining eligibility.
- Grants range from $300 to $1,600, based on household size, income and fuel cost.
- The average grant is about $500.
- In addition to the initial grant, additional funds are available to:
    - Help pay a past due bill or get an emergency fuel delivery.
    - Help homeowners get their broken furnace repaired or replaced.

How to apply for energy assistance

Minnesotans should submit an application to the local service provider in their area. To find your local service provider, call 800-657-3710 or visit the Commerce Department's Energy Assistance Program webpage (https://mn.gov/commerce/consumers/consumer-assistance/energy-assistance/eap-provider.jsp).

Local service providers are situated across Minnesota and cover every corner of the state. There is still plenty of time for new applicants to apply, and those who qualified last year to reapply, however funding is limited and administered on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications will be accepted until May 31, 2021, or until energy assistance funds run out.

Cold Weather Rule protection

In addition to applying for heating assistance, Minnesotans are encouraged to contact their utility and seek protection under the state's Cold Weather Rule to avoid having their heat shut off.

The Cold Weather Rule is in effect from October 15 to April 15 and protects residential utility customers from having their heat shut off, but they must first contact their utility to establish and maintain a monthly payment plan. Households that need to reconnect for winter should contact their utility now to take advantage of the payment options.

Minnesotans who use delivered fuels such as propane, fuel oil or wood to heat their homes are not covered by the Cold Weather Rule, but they may get help from the Energy Assistance Program.

More information on shut-off protection and the Cold Weather Rule is available on the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission website (https://mn.gov/puc/consumers/help/shut-off-protection/) or by calling 651-296-0406 or 800-657-3782.

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