



Stay Warm This Winter

Each year, as part of the Public Utility Commission's (PUC) "Prepare Now" campaign, the Commission highlights programs that help Pennsylvania families prepare for winter weather and higher heating bills. The Prepare Now campaign educates consumers about the availability of PUC-required assistance programs; increases awareness of ways to reduce winter heating costs; and educates consumers on energy conservation. It also encourages consumers to review their electric and natural gas bills and supplier contracts, while informing them about PAPowerSwitch.com and PAGasSwitch.com as resources to shop for energy services.

The PUC's Prepare Now campaign encourages consumers on limited or fixed incomes to call their utility about programs to help pay their energy bills. The PUC requires utilities to have programs and protections that help low-income customers keep their utility service. These programs may help you to pay utility bills or lower the amount of electricity or natural gas you use. The local electric or natural gas company may call them by different names, but each company has the following programs listed below.

Budget Billing: All residential customers may contact their electric or natural gas company to request budget billing at any time. This form of billing is based on the customer's past 12 months of energy usage to arrive at a fixed "average" amount to bill each month. The utility company can adjust this average four times a year higher or lower depending on the customers usage.

Customer Assistance Programs (CAP): This program is set up between the utility company and a low-income, payment-troubled customer to pay utility bills that are based on household size and gross household income. CAP customers agree to make regular monthly payments, which are usually less than the current bill, in exchange for continued utility service.

Customer Assistance Referral and Evaluation Program (CARES): The CARES program will help customers with special needs. Special needs customers are consumers who are experiencing family emergencies, divorce, unemployment, or medical emergencies. The program's goal is to provide support and direction to help customers pay their utility bill.

Low-Income Usage Reduction Program (LIURP): LIURP helps low-income residential customers lower the amount of electricity or natural gas used each month. The utility company may provide free home weatherization. A utility company representative may come to your home to install energy saving features to help reduce your monthly bill.

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Stay Warm This Winter (continued)

Hardship Funds: Utility company hardship funds provide cash assistance to utility customers to help them pay their utility bills. Hardship funds provide assistance grants to customers who “fall through the cracks” of other financial assistance programs, or to those who still have a critical need for assistance after the other resources have been exhausted. The fund makes payments directly to companies on behalf of eligible customers. For further information, contact your local utility company.

According to the PUC’s most recent Universal Service Report, these assistance programs impact more than 474,500 households and are valued at more than \$397 million per year.

Additionally, as part of the annual “Prepare Now” campaign, the Commission continues to appeal to utilities to increase their efforts to educate consumers about other available resources that may be available, such as grants under the federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) – which is administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) – with information available through local County Assistance Offices or via the LIHEAP hotline at 1-866-857-7095.

Homes using potentially unsafe heating sources present risks to those who live there. According to the National Fire Protection Association, potentially unsafe sources of heat include kerosene heaters, kitchen stoves or ovens, electric space heaters, fireplaces and connecting extension cords to neighbors’ homes.

RIGHTS and RESPONSIBILITIES

The PUC emphasized that consumers without utility service should understand their rights and responsibilities, including additional options that may be available for those who are seriously ill or are facing other unique circumstances, such as a protection from abuse order. Consumers should call their utility first to make arrangements to pay their bill. If they are

unable to reach an agreement with the utility, the PUC may be able to provide assistance. The PUC can be reached toll free at 1-800-692-7380.

Thank you to Denise McCracken, Senior Communications Specialist, Office of Communications, Pennsylvania Public Utilities Commission, for providing this article.

PUC Mission Statement: The Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission balances the needs of consumers and utilities; ensures safe and reliable utility service at reasonable rates; protects the public interest; educates consumers to make independent and informed utility choices; furthers economic development; and fosters new technologies and competitive markets in an environmentally sound manner

Universal Service Report: puc.pa.gov/General/publications_reports/pdf/EDC_NGDC_UniServ_Rpt2016.pdf

PUC Prepare Now Letter: http://www.puc.pa.gov/NaturalGas/pdf/PrepareNow/2017_Prepare_Now_Letter.pdf

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

What is LIHEAP?

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps low-income families pay their heating bills. LIHEAP is a grant. You do not have to repay it.

To receive help:

- Apply between November 1, 2017 and April 6, 2018
- You don't have to be on public assistance
- You don't need to have an unpaid heating bill
- You can either rent or own your home



Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

How does LIHEAP work?

LIHEAP offers both cash and crisis grants. Families may apply for:

- **Cash Grants:** Cash grants help families pay their heating bills. The one-time payment is sent directly to your utility company or fuel provider, and it will be credited on your bill. (In some cases, the check may be mailed to you directly.) Cash grants range from \$200-\$1000 and are based on household size, income, and fuel type.
- **Crisis Grants:** Crisis grants may be available if you have an emergency situation and are in jeopardy of losing your heat. You can receive more than one Crisis grant, as necessary, during the season until the maximum benefit of \$500 is reached.

Crisis situations include:

- Broken heating equipment or leaking lines that must be fixed or replaced
- Lack of fuel or danger of being without fuel (less than a 15 day supply) or of having utility service terminated (received a notice that service will be shut off within the next 60 days)
- Termination of utility service

How do you apply?

- Apply online at: www.compass.state.pa.us
- Request an application by calling the Statewide LIHEAP Hotline at 1-866-857-7095 or call PA Relay at 711 for the hearing impaired
- Applications for LIHEAP are available at your local County Assistance Office

To apply, you will need

- Names of people in your household
- Dates of birth for all household members
- Social Security Numbers for all household members
- Proof of income for all household members
- A recent heating bill

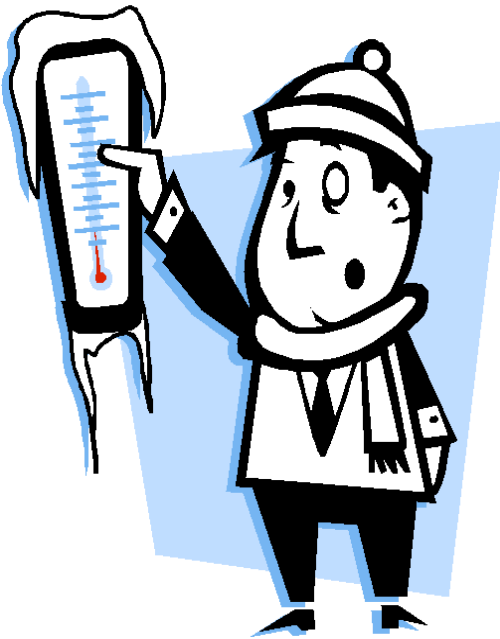
Who is eligible?

Your household income must meet the income guidelines shown on the chart to the right.

LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP) 2017-2018 INCOME GUIDELINES

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	MONTHLY INCOME	YEARLY INCOME
1	\$1,507	\$18,090
2	\$2,030	\$24,360
3	\$2,552	\$30,630
4	\$3,075	\$36,900
5	\$3,597	\$43,170
6	\$4,120	\$49,440
7	\$4,642	\$55,710
8	\$5,165	\$61,980
9	\$5,687	\$68,250
10	\$6,210	\$74,520
EACH ADDITIONAL PERSON ADD	\$ 522	\$ 6,270

Winter Preparedness Tips



Winter is upon us and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Department of Health, would like to offer these winter preparedness tips:

Infants and older Pennsylvanians

- Are at greater risk of serious cold-related health issues and should be checked on frequently to ensure they are warm enough during cold weather.
- Provide warm clothing for infants, and ensure that those less than one year old never sleep in a cold room because they lose body heat more easily than adults and are unable to make enough body heat by shivering.
- Older adults often make less body heat because of a slower metabolism and less physical activity. If you are over 65 years of age, check the temperature in your home often during extremely cold weather.

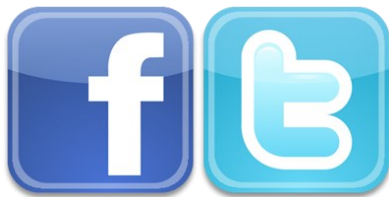
Power Outages

- When power outages occur during winter storms, the use of other sources of fuel or electricity for heating, cooling or cooking can cause carbon monoxide (CO) to build up in a home, garage or camper and poison the people and animals inside.
- CO is found in combustion fumes, such as those made by small gasoline engines, stoves, generators, lanterns and gas ranges, or by burning charcoal and wood.
- How to recognize CO poisoning:
 - Exposure to CO can cause loss of consciousness and death; the most common symptoms of CO poisoning include headache, dizziness, weakness, nausea, vomiting; chest pain; and confusion.
 - People who are sleeping or who have been drinking alcohol can die from CO poisoning before ever having symptoms.



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PEMA Can Also be Found on the Web!

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www.Ready.PA.gov



pennsylvania

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

www.pema.pa.gov

Preparedness Events in January

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service

(www.nationalservice.gov/mlkday)

102nd Pennsylvania Farm Show

January 6-13, 2018

(www.farmshow.pa.gov)

**Are you ReadyPA? Visit us at the ReadyPA Booth at the 2018 PA Farm Show.
We are located in booth #231 in the Weis Exposition Hall**

Additional Resources

Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency: www.pema.pa.gov

ReadyPA: www.Ready.PA.gov

SERVPA: www.Serv.PA.gov

Federal Emergency Management Agency: www.fema.gov

Office of the State Fire Commissioner: www.osfc.pa.gov

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services: www.dhs.pa.gov

Pennsylvania Department of Health: www.health.pa.gov

PA State Animal Response Team: www.pasart.us

PA Department of Transportation: www.penndot.gov

PA511Connect: www.511pa.com

Pennsylvania State Police: www.psp.pa.gov