

NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services & the North Dakota Department of Commerce

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Reminder: Resources Available to help North Dakotans Concerned about Heating Costs

Bismarck, N.D. – the North Dakota Department of Human Services and the North Dakota Department of Commerce want to remind individuals and families concerned about winter heating costs that help is available.

The two agencies work together with county social service offices and community action agencies to assist low-income households with heating-related needs.

The federally-funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) administered by Human Services can pay for part of the heating costs of qualifying households, as well as weatherization services and furnace repairs.

According to Human Services officials, the state LIHEAP program paid an average of \$919 in heating energy costs per participating household last year. The program typically pays fuel vendors directly.

Saving money on heating also involves conservation measures. The Commerce Department administers the federal Low-Income Weatherization Assistance Program, which works to increase the energy efficiency of homes owned or occupied by low-income persons.

An energy auditor visits qualifying households to determine the best weatherization options to reduce energy costs and ensure safety. The program may pay for caulking, weather stripping, insulation in attics, walls, and floors; appropriate home repairs, and furnace repair or replacement.

To avoid duplication, Human Services contracts with Commerce for weatherization and furnace repair and replacement services. The Department of Commerce's Community Services Division, in turn, works closely with the local community action agencies that provide many of the direct services.

Each program has different criteria. The LIHEAP program has income and asset limits to ensure help goes to those most in need. To qualify, a household can earn up to 60 percent of the state median income, which for a family of three equals \$33,860 per year.

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People can apply for LIHEAP heating assistance at their county social service office. Applicant information is confidential. An application is also available online at www.nd.gov/eforms/Doc/sfn00529.pdf and can be completed and returned to a county office.

Last heating season, the state LIHEAP program helped just over 16,000 North Dakota households. Tribal LIHEAP programs also served state residents.

Criteria for the Commerce Department's Weatherization Assistance program are slightly different. A family of three earning up to \$36,620 may qualify. A list of qualifying income levels and other information are on the Web at www.communityservices.nd.gov/energy/weatherization-assistance/.

People can apply for Weatherization Assistance online at www.communityservices.nd.gov/energy/weatherization-assistance/weatherization-application/.

Individuals who do not qualify for either of these government programs should contact their utility companies for an energy audit and recommendations and to set up a balanced payment plan to spread heating costs throughout the year. They can also contact the Community Action Agency in their area for other possible assistance.

Home Heating Tips from the U.S. Department of Energy:

- Turn your thermostat as low as is comfortable in the winter, and turn it down a little lower when you are away from home or asleep.
- Clean or replace furnace filters monthly or as needed.
- Clean warm-air registers, baseboard heaters, and radiators as needed; make sure they're not blocked by furniture, carpeting, or drapes.
- Consider placing window film on the inside of leaky windows, or replace them with energy efficient windows.
- Turn off kitchen, bath, and other exhaust fans within 15-20 minutes after cooking or bathing; when replacing exhaust fans, consider installing high-efficiency, low-noise models.
- During the winter, keep the draperies and shades on south-facing windows open during the day to allow sunlight to enter your home. Close them at night.

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