
Omaha World-Herald
October 3, 2008
By Nancy Gaarder

Nebraskans, Iowans can apply for heat aid

■ Federal funding has more than doubled.

Individuals interested in the substantial boost in federal heat aid this winter can begin applying now in Nebraska and on Nov. 3 in Iowa.

Iowans who are over age 60 or disabled may apply now. President Bush on Tuesday approved spending \$5.1 billion on energy assistance over the next fiscal year, more than double the more typical \$2 billion-level appropriation. Nebraska expects to receive almost \$40 million and Iowa about \$67.8 million.

To qualify, families must meet income guidelines but do not have to be in arrears on their bill, said Mike Kelly, program specialist for the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. Nebraska limits eligibility to 116 percent of the federal poverty level, which for one person would be \$12,069 and two people, \$16,245. Iowa sets its limit at 150 percent, which for one person would be \$15,600, and two people, \$21,000.

Nebraskans may apply on-line at <http://accessnebraska.ne.gov> <<http://accessnebraska.ne.gov/>> or by contacting their local Health and Human Services office. In Douglas County, that number is 595-3400. In Iowa, residents must go through their local community action agency. In Pottawattamie County, that number is 322-2621.

Some individuals with health problems may qualify for assistance even if they are over the income limits. Typically, the money is given directly to the utility and either pays off a customer's bill or serves as a credit for future bills. If an individual qualifies and has been threatened with disconnection, the government will work with the utility to avoid the disconnection.