
NLIEC News
December 31, 2009

In the Energy Assistance Community ...

· **Entergy and Energy Outreach Colorado Lend Financial Support to National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference**

Entergy Corporation and Energy Outreach Colorado recently joined the list of contributors to NEUAC 2010, the National Energy and Utility Affordability Conference. Both entities are members of the National Fuel Funds Network's and National Low Income Energy Consortium's Boards of Directors. Entergy, which has become a \$5,000 conference Sponsor, is an integrated energy company engaged primarily in electric power production and retail distribution operations. It delivers electricity to 2.7 million utility customers in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. Energy Outreach Colorado is the only non-profit organization in the state of Colorado that raises money through donations and foundation grants to help families in need pay energy bills and avoid shut offs. Its executive director, Skip Arnold, is one of the national co-chairs for NEUAC 2010.

· **NFFN Seeking Photos for Use At LIHEAP Action Day**

The National Fuel Funds Network is collecting photographs that illustrate the increased demand for energy assistance to use as part of its LIHEAP Action Day in Washington on February 10. NFFN is seeking photos of people lined up to apply for energy assistance or photos of crowded waiting rooms that can help us demonstrate just how important energy assistance is to millions of Americans. They ask that you use digital cameras or cell phone cameras to record what's going on in your area and then email the images to <mailto:info@nationalfuelfunds.org>. Please include a date and place with each photo, if possible. Also, please check your local newspaper for photos that you could forward to NFFN. Depending on what they have, NFFN will produce a brochure or other package of images to illustrate the demand — and put faces on it — to Congress on that day. Results will be shared on the NFFN, NLIEC and NEUAC websites as part of the NFFN's and NLIEC's "Faces of Energy Assistance" project. The NFFN is a member of the NLIEC Board of Directors.

· **NEADA Study Shows Record Number of Households Receive Energy Assistance**

State directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program have released the results of their Fiscal Year 2009 state recipient survey. The number of households receiving heating assistance reached record levels for the second year in a row, increasing from 6.1 million (5.8 million heating and 0.3 million cooling) to 8.3 million (7.7 million heating and 0.6

million cooling). The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association, a member of the NLIEC Board of Directors, said 11 states reported increases of more than 50 percent: California 162 percent, Texas 122 percent, Florida 104 percent, Nevada 80 percent, Arizona 80 percent, Oklahoma 76.3 percent, Kentucky 72.1 percent, Delaware 71 percent, Tennessee 62 percent, Oregon 55 percent and Washington, 54 percent. — *NEADA news release*, December 18, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.neada.org/communications/press/2009-12-18-PressRelease.pdf>>

· **Maryland Utility Donates \$1 Million for New Furnaces**

Constellation Energy has donated \$1 million to the Baltimore Community Foundation to establish the Baltimore Gas and Electric Company (BGE) Heating System Fund, which has begun providing new, energy efficient furnaces to qualifying limited-income customers in Baltimore in need of a heating system replacement. Constellation is the parent company of BGE, the largest utility in Maryland and a member of the NLIEC Board of Directors. “This program is designed to assist limited-income households that do not qualify for existing energy assistance programs but are nonetheless struggling to make ends meet during this severe economic downturn,” said Mayo A. Shattuck III, chairman, president and chief executive officer of Constellation Energy. “For these families, a new, efficient furnace can mean lower bills during the winter heating season. We’re proud to be working together with the city of Baltimore on a program that will make a real difference for limited-income families.” The BGE Heating System Fund, launched in November, provides furnace replacements to qualified households above income eligibility levels for state utility bill assistance grants (above 175 percent of federal poverty guidelines). — *LIHEAP Clearinghouse*, December 4, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.liheap.ncat.org/news/dec09/md.htm>>

In Washington ...

· **Final Appropriation for LIHEAP Set at \$5.1 Billion**

Congress has passed and President Obama has signed an omnibus appropriations bill that provides \$5.1 billion in funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance program for the current fiscal year. The funding for LIHEAP was part of a measure combining several appropriations bills that had not been passed before the start of the fiscal year. The president signed the bill on December 16. The LIHEAP funding includes \$4.5 billion in formula funds and \$590 million in contingency funding. LIHEAP and many other government programs had been operating under funding provided through a continuing resolution that was set to expire December 18.

· **EIA Revises Home Energy Cost Projections Downward**

The U.S. Energy Information Administration has revised its figures for home heating costs this winter, predicting slightly lower consumer costs than it did a month earlier. In its Short-Term Energy Outlook on December 8, the EIA said the average household expenditures on heating oil this winter are expected to increase to \$1,911 from \$1,864 last winter — a 2.5 percent increase. The new figure compares with a cost projection of \$1,940 for heating oil in the EIA’s November short-term outlook. Projected average household expenditures for propane of

\$1,700 this winter are almost 13 percent lower than last winter's \$1,950 and down from its November projection of \$1,743. The administration said average household expenditures on natural gas are projected to total \$778 this winter, down 12.5 percent from \$889 last winter and down slightly from the \$792 estimated in November. The EIA expects delivered natural gas fuel costs for generating electricity to rise by 10 percent next year. However, lower delivered coal costs combined with comparatively more generation from coal should reduce residential electricity prices by about 0.9 percent for the winter. In November it predicted that electricity expenditures would hold fairly steady, falling 0.07 percent from \$953 to \$946. — *U.S. Energy Information Administration*, December 8, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/steo/pub/contents.html>>

In the States ...

· **Commission Approves Natural Gas Rate Hike for Oklahoma**

Most Oklahoma Natural Gas customers will see an average rate increase of about \$4 on their monthly bills after a panel approved a rate hike Monday for the state's largest utility. The Oklahoma Corporation Commission unanimously approved a settlement that allows a base rate increase of \$54.5 million in total revenue over the existing rate. Because several expenses that appear on customers' bills as separate charges are being shifted to the base rate, the net rate increase is about \$26 million overall. Officials with ONG, a subsidiary of Tulsa-based ONEOK, said the rate hike was needed to offset some of the \$168 million in investments the company has made since its last rate hike was approved in 2005. Among those investments were \$57 million spent repairing lines, \$54 million in expansions to new customers and \$36 million to replace obsolete meters. — *Associated Press*, December 14, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jyRUqZdCVcRhSi0jPV1w9EwgNBogD9CJAFI00>>

· **Texas Agency Slow to Spend Stimulus Funds to Weatherize Homes**

The state received millions of federal dollars from the economic-stimulus package to help poor Texans cut their energy bills, but by the end of last month, just seven homes had been weather-treated under the program. The state has spent \$1.8 million of \$163 million available over the past four months, with most of it going to administrative costs, such as the salaries of state workers. The weatherization program was a key element of the federal effort to revive the economy, billed as a quick way to create jobs, save energy and cut utility bills. In Texas, the task has been heaped onto a midsized agency that must figure how to hand out millions more in federal funds to local agencies and governments, but do it carefully enough to avoid wasting money. — *Dallas Morning News*, December 20, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/localnews/stories/DN-weatherization_20tex.ART.State.Edition2.4c3bef0.html>

In the News ...

· **New Assurance Wireless Available to Over 1.5 Million Lower-Income Households in New York State**

Virgin Mobile USA has announced its launch of Assurance Wireless, a new cell phone service that makes wireless calling available at no cost to more than a million eligible lower-income households throughout New York. The wireless company is partnering with non-profit organization HeartShare Human Services in New York City to introduce this new service that provides more free minutes per month than other similar prepaid programs. — *CNN Money*, December 9, 2009

Read more at: <http://money.cnn.com/news/newsfeeds/articles/marketwire/0567170.htm>

Electricity Suppliers to Compete for Customers

PPL Electric Utilities will no longer be the sole supplier for electricity once rate caps come off Jan 1. Electricity customers are then expected to select an alternative supplier for electricity. PPL will still deliver electricity and do all the billing for power, but the power can come from another company somewhere else. Some people may not shop and PPL Electric Utilities is compelled to provide power to them as default “provider of last resort.” — *Wilkes-Barre (PA) Citizens Voice*, December 9, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.citizensvoice.com/news/electricity-suppliers-to-compete-for-customers-1.471662>

Agencies Staggered by New Requests for Utility Help

Julia Campbell never had to ask for help before. But when the 62-year-old Ralls County resident was laid off from her customer service job five weeks ago, reality set in. “I kept thinking ‘I can do this, I can make it,’” Campbell said. “Between the electric bills, the gasoline and my medications, I didn’t have it. I couldn’t make it happen.” Campbell uses propane and electricity. The bills rose as colder weather set in. “I had one space heater that I was dragging around from room to room,” she said. “I was wondering ‘How am I going to pay the electric bill if I have to keep this up all winter?’” Campbell found help from the North East Community Action Corporation. NECAC paid part of her utility bills so that Campbell could budget money for other needs. — *Hannibal (MO) Courier-Post*, December 11, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.hannibal.net/lifestyles/x1769697067/Agencies-staggered-by-new-requests-for-utility-help>

Fewer Philadelphians Get Heating Grants This Year

Despite a fierce recession and record unemployment, far fewer Philadelphia Gas Works customers have received low-income heating grants this year, and the municipal utility says it is facing a multimillion-dollar shortfall. About 11,523 PGW households have received federal heating grants this year, about a third as many as last year. The utility says it had received \$2.8 million in grant income so far this heating season, about \$9 million less than it had at the same time last year. The drop-off in grants, which utility and social-service advocates attribute to changes in the way the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare administers the federal program, has far-reaching consequences. — *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 17, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.philly.com/philly/business/79476752.html>

Government Helps More Americans Pay Their Heat Bills

More Americans are getting help to pay home heating bills, and more are likely to need help as the economy continues to struggle, says the National Energy Assistance Directors’

Association. Almost 8 million U.S. households received federal government help to heat homes in fiscal year 2009, up 33% from the prior year, the association says. Applications for assistance in the current fiscal year, which started Oct. 1, are running even higher as more people join the ranks of the long-term unemployed, the association says. "It looks like 2010 will be a very difficult winter for a lot of people," says Mark Wolfe, the association's executive director. The group represents programs that subsidize energy bills. More households got assistance last year because of increased funding. Congress gave \$5.1 billion to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program, or LIHEAP. That was up from \$2.6 billion in fiscal 2008. — *USA Today* and *Wall Street Journal*, December 18, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.usatoday.com/money/industries/energy/2009-12-18-energyaid18_ST_N.htm> <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB126110107527096499.html?mod=WSJ_hpp_MIDDLTopStories>

- **Utility Bill is One More Casualty of Recession**

For the Cardente family, the shutoff of their electricity and gas in September was a wrenching marker in a two-year downslide. A run of mishaps, including illness and the husband's workplace injury, extensive structural damage from a burst water bed and the mother's layoff from a nursing job, had already upended their middle-class lives. Then the pile of utility bills emerged as a headache to rival the past-due mortgage. "You always try to pay your mortgage or rent to keep a roof over your head," said Debra Cardente, the mother. "Then you ask, do you pay your electric or gas bill, pay your telephone or put food on the table?" The recession has accentuated what was already a growing home-energy challenge for low-income and many middle-class households across the nation. — *New York Times*, December 19, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/20/us/20utility.html>>

- **Need for Heat Aid in Minnesota Higher This Year**

This winter, Art Swanson is thankful to be part of a group he'd just as soon have avoided. The Anoka County resident represents the newest trend among the more than 125,000 Minnesotans who have applied for federal heating assistance since Oct. 1 (the start of the fiscal year): At 50, he's a first-time customer. He was laid off in January from his job as a union glazier, installing windows and doors mostly in new commercial buildings, and work this year has been inconsistent at best. Statewide, the number of applicants to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is up 8 percent from this time last year, and 19.5 percent from December 2007. Administrators point to a growing number of families dealing with unemployment or underemployment for the first time. — *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, December 21, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.startribune.com/local/north/79774177.html?elr=KArks:DCiUo3PD:3D_V_qD3L:c7cQKUId3aPc:_Yyc:aUU>

- **Demand for Energy Assistance Up**

Demand for energy assistance has jumped across Montana this winter, with the biggest increase in demand coming from the Bozeman and Billings areas. "The recession is starting to hit people pretty hard," said Jim Noland, director of the state's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. "We're seeing people we haven't normally seen." ... Although demand for the program has never decreased, the federal government cut Montana's subsidy from

\$29.2 million last year to \$26 million. Wyoming received \$9.5 million, down from \$14 million. Five million low-income households benefit from the program across the nation. *Billings (MT) Gazette*, December 29, 2009

Read more at: <http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/article_6d95f310-f4d8-11de-a77c-001cc4c002e0.html>

- **Energy Aid Requests at Record High**

The number of low-income people needing energy assistance reached record highs in 2009, for the second year in a row, according to the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association. About 6.1 million people required help with heating and cooling bills in 2008, and 8.3 million received help in 2009. In Illinois, the numbers also saw a big increase. Households helped with heating costs by the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program went from 319,828 in 2008 to 415,669 in 2009. Add in the cooling increase from 56,080 in 2008 to 63,746 in 2009 and you have an overall heating and cooling increase of 27.5 percent, or 103,507 more households requiring assistance, the NEADA data shows. — *Peoria (IL) Journal Star*, December 30, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.pjstar.com/news/x1444027435/Energy-aid-requests-at-record-high>>

- **Pine Ridge Residents Running Low on Fuel and Food**

Lloyd Wilcox hauled groceries home on a sled Tuesday to a house without heat, days after a severe winter storm paralyzed the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and left an estimated 800 homes there without propane. Five days after the storm hit on Christmas Eve, reservation residents are still facing unplowed roads, electrical outages, broken water pipes and diminishing supplies of food and fuel. On Tuesday, Oglala Sioux Tribe President Theresa Two Bulls declared a state of emergency for the reservation. Two Bulls and the tribe's Emergency Management Team conferred Tuesday with representatives from the state Office of Emergency Management and road departments in Fall River, Custer and Haakon counties to coordinate snow removal efforts. — *Rapid City Journal*, December 30, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.rapidcityjournal.com/news/article_139d544e-f4c8-11de-8d92-001cc4c002e0.html>

Editorials ...

- **Consequences of State Cuts Could be Chilling**

Wondering what kind of cuts are possible as the state Legislature convenes a special session today? We can look to Operation Fuel, the emergency energy assistance program for low-income working families, the elderly and disabled, to see what happens when state help dries up. At New Britain's Human Resources Agency, Barbara Parsons, the director of Community Services, told NBC30 that requests for assistance are up nearly 20 percent. Parsons says her agency is doing all it can to help. But Operation Fuel won't even be able to take applications from households ineligible for government programs this winter until at least Jan 4, 2010, according to Executive Director Patricia Wrice. That's because the money is simply not there. — *New Britain (CT) Herald*, December 14, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.newbritainherald.com/articles/2009/12/14/opinion/>>

doc4b2706167f474739628002.txt>

- **A Lump of Cold**

As winter closes in, the painful human toll is becoming all too clear from the widely criticized, wholesale changes made this year in Pennsylvania's annual heating-aid program. Gov. Rendell's administration — under departing welfare chief Estelle B. Richman — took an overly conservative approach to doling out federally funded low-income heating grants. While fiscally prudent, that course resulted in far fewer families getting aid, along with a nearly 20 percent spike in those without heating utility service. It's not the bureaucrats who will be shivering in their homes today as a snowstorm hits the state. That fate falls instead to the more than 17,000 households — including many in Philadelphia — that the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission reports face the cold weather with their utilities cut off. — *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 19, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.philly.com/inquirer/opinion/79707897.html>>

- **More Residents Struggle to Keep Heat On**

The sluggish economy is affecting Inland Northwest residents' ability to heat their homes. Utilities are reporting higher rates of delinquent payments and shut-offs. And entities that provide energy assistance have been besieged with pleas for help. "I hear from people who've never before requested our services," said Ron Hardin, spokesman for SNAP, a Spokane nonprofit. "They have lost their jobs or they have catastrophic illness in their families. These folks come to me almost apologetically. They've never needed help, but they find themselves in dire straits." — *Spokane (WA) Spokesman-Review*, December 23, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.spokesman.com/stories/2009/dec/23/more-residents-struggle-to-keep-heat-on/>>

- **The Heat is Off: No Pennsylvanian Should be Left in the Cold**

It comes as no surprise, given the glum state of the economy, that the number of Pennsylvanians who can't heat their homes is escalating. The Public Utility Commission last week released the results of its annual Cold Weather Survey, which showed that 17,037 households lack heat, an increase of almost 19 percent over the 14,372 households without gas or electric service for their furnaces a year ago. In an additional 3,992 homes, people are using unsafe sources of heat that include kerosene heaters, kitchen stoves or ovens, electric space heaters, fireplaces and connecting extension cords to their neighbors' houses. ... There is help available to those who cannot afford to pay their utility bills, but not as much as last year. — *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, December 25, 2009

Read more at: <<http://www.istockanalyst.com/article/viewiStockNews/articleid/3738968>>

- **When It's Cold Inside**

In yet another measure of the economy's troubles, a record number of households — 8.3 million — received federal aid to help pay their energy bills in 2009, up from a record 6.1 million in 2008. Based on early applications for 2010, more than 10 million families are likely to need help to keep the heat on this winter. Many of them have never needed help before. The surge has caught policy makers unprepared. In the past, rising energy prices usually drove the need for heating assistance. Of late, there have been no sudden price increases.

Indeed, average costs are expected to decline modestly this winter. This relatively benign outlook for energy prices led Congress to hold the 2010 appropriation for heating assistance at \$5.1 billion — the same level as in 2009. So what happened? What happened was the recession, which cost jobs, which squeezed incomes. — *New York Times*, December 27, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/28/opinion/28mon2.html?scp=1&sq=When+it%27s+Cold+Inside&st=nyt>

Commentaries ...

· **More Lumps of Coal for PG&E**

Just when I think I can't possibly be more outraged by the insufferable antics of PG&E — Blam! They do it again. Now, they've started charging "deposits" to people who are late paying their bills. These aren't deposits for reconnection. PG&E "volunteered" (after consumer groups last week demanded the California Public Utilities Commission require it) to stop charging reconnection deposits until March 2011 as a nod to this little economic meltdown we're in. ... Their yuletide spirit knows no bounds. — Lois Henry in the *Bakersfield (CA) Californian*, December 22, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.bakersfield.com/news/columnist/henry/x113237896/LOIS-HENRY-More-lumps-of-coal-for-PG-E>

· **HOUSE CALL: Carbon Monoxide Can Kill**

You can't see it, smell it or taste it, but carbon monoxide — a gas released when fuel is burned — can be deadly. Wood, oil, gasoline, natural gas, kerosene and coal all produce carbon monoxide. In your home, carbon monoxide can come from a variety of things, such as a heating system, cooking appliance or fireplace. It's also present in fumes from vehicles, small engines and barbecues. There's little to worry about when appliances and other devices are working right and fumes are properly vented. But when they're not, carbon monoxide levels can get high enough to cause illness and death. Hundreds of people in the United States die every year from carbon monoxide poisoning. — Matthew Berry in the *San Angelo (TX) Standard-Times*, December 28, 2009

Read more at: <http://www.gosanangelo.com/news/2009/dec/28/carbon-monoxide-can-kill/>

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