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*National Fuel Funds Network*

1010 Vermont Ave., NW, #718, Washington, DC 20005

202 824-0638 (fax), 202 824-0660 (phone)

[info@nationalfuelfunds.org](mailto:info@nationalfuelfunds.org) <<http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org>>

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**Energy Safety Net Bulletin #148**

Frigid temperatures, heavy snows and high winds this winter have resulted in increased utility usage and higher home energy bills for millions of Americans at a time when many can least afford it.

Across the country utility companies are reporting dramatic increases in electric and gas usage during the coldest days of winter. In the Carolinas, utility companies recorded record levels of consumption in January and in Missouri, Kansas City Power and Light asked customers to conserve energy because the cold weather was putting a strain on its power plants.

South Carolina Gas and Electric set a one day record for electric consumption on January 12 when the temperature dropped to 19 degrees. On the same day in North Carolina, Duke Energy reported its 2.5 million customers used 17,282 megawatts of power. Dominion Virginia Power reported that usage was up 33 percent in some parts of its service area.

Please let us know what the situation is in your area. As we prepare for the NFFN's LIHEAP Action Day, the information you provide will be used to help explain to the members of Congress the problems many people are facing as they try to keep their homes warm this winter.

**NFFN's LIHEAP ACTION DAY**

*The NFFN's LIHEAP Action Day is February 10. Here is your chance to participate in the largest grassroots lobbying effort supporting the Low Income Energy Assistance Program. Registration is still open and reduced rate hotel rooms are available until February 1.*



To register, click here <[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Nv7i8K0eVSi6NvIWQ\\_2bW\\_2bmw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=Nv7i8K0eVSi6NvIWQ_2bW_2bmw_3d_3d)>. For information about hotels rooms, visit the NFFN website – <<http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org>> .

**State Government Actions**

- New Jersey Acting Governor Stephen M. Sweeney has signed legislation that provides NJShares with funding to assist the state's limited and moderate income households, who cannot afford their heating bills and do not qualify for federal energy assistance. Jim Jacob, NJShares executive director, said "Many New Jerseyans have never before faced such difficulty making ends meet, and thanks to the unwavering support of our governor, legislators, partners and friends, NJ Shares will be able to continue to help more families in crisis this year." The legislation provides NJ Shares with \$25 million in funding.

### **Utility Actions**

- Dominion East Ohio has contributed \$350,000 to EnergyShare, the natural gas utility's last resort assistance program. EnergyShare provides assistance grants to income-eligible customers to help pay to heat their homes, no matter what form of energy they use, after they have exhausted all other types of assistance. "With the continuing difficult economic and weather conditions, we expect more of our customers will need to seek energy assistance this winter, including many who have never had to seek help before," said Anne E. Bomar, Dominion East Ohio senior vice president and general manager.
- Black Hills Energy and the Metropolitan Utilities District have joined with Hy-Vee stores in Nebraska and Iowa in a campaign to raise contributions to Black Hills Cares. Canisters have been placed in all participating Hy-Vee stores and customers are encouraged to donate their pocket change. The campaign, which runs until Feb. 21, is also sponsored by The Salvation Army and television station KETV.

### **Congressional Actions**

- Capitol Hill sources report that work has begun on draft of legislation to create a national home efficiency program that will provide incentives for the purchase of energy efficient appliances and making energy efficient home improvements. The legislation would create a two-tier efficiency program. The first tier, the "Gold Star" program, would provide as much as \$12,000 or 50 percent of total home retrofit costs depending on how much energy is saved. A homeowner who reduced their energy use by 50 percent could claim the full rebate. Homeowners would be required to work with a certified contractor to be eligible for the rebates under the Gold Star program.

Under the other tier, the "Silver Star" program, homeowners would receive rebates of as much as \$1,000 each for insulating walls or attics, replacing windows and installing energy efficient heating and cooling equipment. Homeowners that purchase energy efficient appliances like dishwashers and washers and dryers could receive a \$250 rebate. Sources said the legislation will likely become part of the jobs bill that Congress hopes to pass in the coming month or so. We will continue to monitor the progress of this proposed legislation.

### **LIHEAP**

- The Department of Health and Human Services, this week announced the release of \$490 million in LIHEAP contingency funds. LIHEAP supporters and many members of the

House and Senate had urged the President to release the additional funds. With the release of these funds, \$100 million in emergency funds remain unobligated. For a chart of state allocations, visit <[http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2010/liheap\\_2010\\_490m.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/news/press/2010/liheap_2010_490m.html)>.

George Coling, Executive Director  
National Fuel Funds Network  
1010 Vermont Ave., NW Suite 718  
Washington, DC 20005  
202-824-0660  
[www.nationalfuelfunds.org](http://www.nationalfuelfunds.org)