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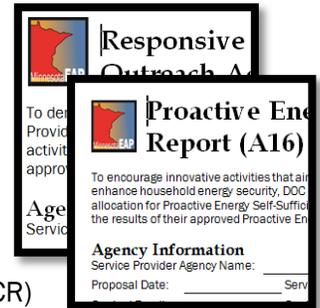
Policies and Procedures: Reminder: Reporting on FFY15 Assurance 16 activities due tomorrow; FFY2016 EAP Federal Funding Update

Notices: News Release: Minnesota consumers can seek winter protection under the Cold Weather Rule and apply for heating assistance; Minnesota Public Utilities Commission rate case information

Policies & Procedures

Reminder: Reporting on FFY15 Assurance 16 activities due tomorrow

FFY2015 Assurance 16 Reports are due tomorrow. Service Providers must complete and submit their FFY15 Responsive Energy Self-Sufficiency and Outreach Reports (Appendix 9C) by the end of the day October 15, 2015. Any Service Providers with an approved Proactive Energy Self-Sufficiency plan must also submit a completed Proactive Energy Self-Sufficiency Report (Appendix 9B) by October 15, 2015. The reports are available on the Commerce website.



FFY2016 EAP Federal Funding Update



The Senate and the House passed a Continuing Resolution (CR) on September 30 to keep the federal government operating on October 1 when FY2016 began. The President signed the bill, keeping the government open until December 11, 2015. Agencies are funded for FFY2016 at their FY2015 levels, with the exception of an across-the-board 0.2108 percent reduction to ensure the total does not exceed agreed upon budget caps.

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is working with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to determine the CR's LIHEAP funding. Funds have not been distributed to States while this work is being completed. Commerce EAP staff will provide updates when they are available.

Notices

The following news release was issued on Monday, October 12:



October 12, 2015

Minnesota consumers can seek winter protection under the

Cold Weather Rule and apply for heating assistance

For Immediate Release:

SAINT PAUL — As the heating season kicks in, the Minnesota Department of Commerce and the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (PUC) encourage Minnesotans to contact their utilities now to learn more about the Cold Weather Rule that protects residential utility customers from having their heat shut off during the winter months.

The rule takes effect on October 15 and continues through April 15, 2016.

To prevent heating disconnection, customers must first contact their utility to establish and maintain a monthly payment plan. All electric and natural gas companies are required to offer Cold Weather Rule protection.

“The Cold Weather Rule and our Energy Assistance Program are here to help Minnesota families who may struggle with heating costs during the winter,” said Minnesota Commerce Commissioner Mike Rothman. “No Minnesotan should be left out in the cold.”

Under the Cold Weather Rule, customers who have a combined household income at or below 50 percent of the state median income (\$46,056 for a family of four) are not required to pay more than 10 percent of their household income toward current and past heating bills. Others are also eligible to arrange a Cold Weather Rule payment plan.

Minnesotans who need to re-connect for winter should contact their utility now to take advantage of the payment options. The Cold Weather Rule is administered by the PUC.

“The Cold Weather Rule is a safeguard for the most vulnerable Minnesotans during our challenging winters,” said PUC Chair Beverly Jones Heydinger. “It ensures that households in need are safe, warm and healthy. By working out a payment plan with their utility, Minnesota families with financial challenges can still keep their heat on.”

Minnesota consumers using delivered fuels such as fuel oil, propane or wood to heat their homes are not covered by the Cold Weather Rule. However, they are encouraged to contact the companies that serve them to discuss payment options if they are concerned about their ability to pay for fuel. For example, a new law requires propane distributors to offer all customers a budget plan.

More information on the Cold Weather Rule is available at [the Public Utilities Commission](#) website or by calling 651-296-0406 or 800-657-3782.

Minnesota’s Energy Assistance Program

In addition to the Cold Weather Rule, Minnesota offers the Energy Assistance Program (EAP) to help pay home heating costs. The Minnesota Commerce Department administers the program in partnership with 31 local service providers throughout the state. It is federally funded through Low

Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Minnesota’s Energy Assistance Program helps homeowners and renters earning at or below 50 percent of the state’s median income (\$46,056 for a family of four) pay their heating bills. The average annual payment per household last year was about \$500. Households with seniors, people with disabilities, veterans and children are especially encouraged to apply.

Applications were recently sent to households that qualified for energy assistance last year. Others who may qualify are encouraged to apply by contacting the local service provider in their county by calling 800-657-3710. Information is also available at the Commerce Department’s [Energy Assistance Program](#) webpage.

Minnesota consumers using delivered fuels to heat their homes are eligible for Energy Assistance Program grants even though they are not covered by the Cold Weather Rule.

Weatherization Assistance Program

The Commerce Department also administers the [Weatherization Assistance Program](#), which provides energy efficiency improvements to reduce energy costs for needy households that meet income eligibility guidelines. Both homeowners and renters may apply for weatherization assistance.

Other forms of assistance may be available through county social service programs, community-based organizations and nonprofit agencies. For a list of resources, visit the [Stay Warm Minnesota section](#) of the Commerce website.

Energy-saving tips

The Commerce Department's Division of Energy Resources offers energy-saving information that every household can use to help control heating costs. Some basic no-cost and low-cost energy-saving recommendations include:

- Weather strip and caulk windows and doors to keep warm air in and cold air out.
- Cover drafty windows with tightly sealed plastic.
- Open curtains and blinds on south-facing windows to let the sun in during the day to naturally heat your home.
- Seal air leaks to prevent cold air from entering through chimneys, vents, pipes and wires that penetrate walls, ceilings and attics.
- Close your fireplace damper when a fire is not in use to prevent warm air from escaping.
- Maintain your heating system. Have annual furnace or boiler inspections, clean or replace furnace filters regularly, and consider replacing old heating systems with more efficient ENERGY STAR® models.
- Use a programmable thermostat. Set your thermostat to automatically turn down the heat at night and when nobody is home.

More energy-saving tips can be found at the U.S. Department of Energy's [Energysaver pages](#). For more information on reducing energy use in your home, check out the Commerce Department's [Home Energy Guide](#).

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The Minnesota Department of Commerce is here to help.

Media Contact:

Ross Corson

Director of Communications

[Minnesota Department of Commerce](#)

P: 651-539-1463 | C: 651-368-5050 | ross.corson@state.mn.us

Dan Wolf

[Minnesota Public Utilities Commission](#)

P: 651-201-2217



Minnesota Public Utilities Commission rate case information:

Xcel Energy Electric

- Docket Number E-002/GR-13-868
- November 4, 2013 - Xcel Energy Electric request
- January 3, 2014 - Interim rates start
- June 2014 - Public hearings

- May 2015 - Public Utilities Commission decision
- To be determined - New rates start

Dakota Electric Association

- Docket Number E-111/GR-14-482
- July 2, 2014 – Dakota Electric Association request
- September 11, 2014 - Interim rates start
- December 2014 - Public hearings
- June 2015 - Public Utilities Commission decision
- November 12, 2015 - New rates start

CenterPoint Energy

- Docket Number G-008/GR-15-424
- August 3, 2015 – CenterPoint Energy request
- October 2, 2015 – Interim rates start
- December 2015 - Public hearings
- May 2016 - Public Utilities Commission decision

Minnesota Energy Resources (MERC)

- Docket Number G-011/GR-15-736
- September 30, 2015 – Minnesota Energy Resources request
- January 1, 2016 – Interim rates start
- To be determined - Public hearings
- To be determined – Public Utilities Commission decision

Great Plains Natural Gas

- Docket Number G-004/GR-15-879
- September 30, 2015 – Great Plans Natural Gas request
- January 1, 2016 – Interim rates start
- To be determined - Public hearings
- To be determined – Public Utilities Commission decision

Xcel Energy Electric

- Docket Number E-002/GR-15-826
- November 2, 2015 - Xcel Energy Electric request expected
- To be determined - Interim rates start
- To be determined - Public hearings
- To be determined - Public Utilities Commission decision

Questions or Comments?

Consumer Affairs Office
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 Seventh Place East, Suite 350
St Paul MN 55101-2147
mn.gov/puc – *Speak Up!*
consumer.puc@state.mn.us
651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782
Fax 651-297-7073
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