

## WEATHERIZATION



# Weatherization results in home comfort and lower utility bills for Austin, MN woman

Each year, Minnesota's Weatherization Assistance Program provides free home energy upgrades to income-eligible homeowners and renters to help save energy and make sure those homes are a healthy and safe place to live.

Shirley, who lives in Austin, Minnesota, is one of thousands to participate in the Weatherization Assistance Program. The process started for her in 2024 with a free home energy audit.

The audit highlighted practical upgrades that would lower her energy costs and make her home more comfortable. Those improvements included adding insulation, installing a new hot water heater, improving basement ventilation, adding smoke detectors, and more.

"Now I am warm in the winter, and the house is cooler in the summer," said Shirley, a widow and retired nurse.

For more than 40 years, the state's Weatherization Assistance Program has served as a lifeline to tens of thousands of Minnesotans who simply can't afford to make significant home energy improvements. The program serves financially vulnerable residents like Shirley who struggle with high energy bills. It gives priority to the elderly, disabled, families with children, and those with the highest energy bills.

"I've lived here for the past 55 years, this is where I raised three children, countless gardens outside, and sew to this day," added Shirley.

As a retiree on a fixed income, Shirley has also been part of Minnesota's Energy Assistance Program. Weatherization works closely with its companion program, Energy Assistance.



"I've really noticed a difference," said Weatherization recipient Shirley, a retired nurse in Austin, Minnesota.

"I am warm in the winter and the house is cooler in the summer," said Shirley.

### Minnesota's Weatherization program is locally delivered

Both Weatherization and Energy Assistance are administered by a state-wide network of locally based community action agencies or service providers. Oversight is provided by the Division of Energy Resources at the Minnesota Department of Commerce. Both programs are funded by the federal government.

In Shirley's case, the local service provider is Semcac, a non-profit that serves seven core counties in Southeast Minnesota. Shirley lives in Mower County, within the Semcac service area.

Semcac, like the other local service providers across Minnesota, has a mission to empower people to enhance their self-sufficiency by maximizing community resources.

es. In addition to Weatherization and Energy Assistance, Semcac also offers a health clinic, food shelves, senior nutrition and caregiver advocacy, emergency resource services, transportation, Head Start, and home repair loan programs.

As a Weatherization service provider, Semcac provided the expertise, installation, paid for, and completed the improvements to Shirley's home.

With the added ventilation as part of Shirley's home improvements, the air quality in the home improved, and the basement became noticeably drier.

"I've really noticed a difference," said Shirley. "The northwest spare bedroom is my sewing room, and it no longer feels cold on windy days. And my furnace isn't running nearly as much."

The Minnesota Weatherization program permanently reduces the energy bills for low-income Minnesotans.

Households receiving weatherization assistance see long term energy cost reductions averaging 30% and large reductions in their energy burdens.

### Learn more and how to apply

Minnesota residents can obtain an application for Weatherization and Energy Assistance by contacting the local service provider in their area or by accessing it online at [mn.gov/commerce/energy/consumer-assistance/wap](https://mn.gov/commerce/energy/consumer-assistance/wap). Energy Assistance and Weatherization Assistance use a joint application for both programs. To receive help with finding your local service provider, contact the Commerce Energy Information Center at 800-657-3710 or [energy.info@state.mn.us](mailto:energy.info@state.mn.us).



Shirley's home in Austin, Minnesota received a home energy audit that highlighted practical upgrades to lower her energy costs and make her home more comfortable. Those improvements included adding insulation, installing a new hot water heater, and improving basement ventilation.

### Weatherization program facts

- Minnesota's Weatherization Assistance Program serves an estimated **3,000 Minnesotans** annually.
- Minnesota's Energy Assistance Program has helped **90,258 households** this past program year.
- Since the program began in 1976, Weatherization has helped improve the lives of more than **7.2 million families** across the United States.



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