

## Energy Assistance Program doubles crisis benefits to \$1,200 per household for Minnesotans struggling with heating costs following February cold snap

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The Minnesota Department of Commerce announced today that the Energy Assistance Program administered by the Department will increase the maximum annual crisis benefit for qualifying households from \$600 to \$1,200, following the February arctic blast. Crisis benefits can be used for covering past-due utility bills, for utility disconnections and for emergency fuel deliveries.

Minnesota's Energy Assistance Program can help households pay energy bills, get reconnected or prevent energy disconnection, get fuel delivered, learn about efficiency and safety, and repair or replace homeowners' broken heating systems.

For those who have not already applied for help this heating season, there is still time. Both renters and homeowners can qualify to get energy assistance. For households who have already received assistance, even more benefits may be available. Households with young children, people with disabilities, veterans, seniors and those experiencing unemployment or financial hardship as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic are especially encouraged to apply.

"No one should have to choose between heating their home and buying food or other essentials because of February's frigid temperatures. That's why we're doubling the heating crisis support for families," said Commerce Department Temporary Commissioner Grace Arnold. "In addition, if you are a household experiencing an energy emergency, the local service providers and the Commerce Department may be able to provide you even more financial assistance.

"The Department of Commerce is also investigating utilities' natural gas purchases and looking at ways to lessen the impact of unexpected natural gas cost increases."

On February 23, the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and Department of Commerce [jointly announced an investigation by the State of Minnesota](#) into impacts of the natural gas price spike.

The Energy Assistance Program serves households that earn less than \$54,357 for a household of four or \$28,266 for a household of one, with assistance up to \$1,600. It helps income-qualifying homeowners and renters with heating bills through grant money paid directly to utility companies or heating fuel vendors. Stimulus payments from the Federal Government and pandemic-related unemployment insurance payments are not counted as income when determining if a household is eligible for energy assistance.

In November 2020, Minnesota received more than \$106 million in federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds for this year's Energy Assistance Program.

Last winter season (2019-2020), the Energy Assistance Program served nearly 118,000 Minnesota households, most in Greater Minnesota. These households included nearly 57,000 seniors, almost 35,000 young children, more than 57,000 people with disabilities and roughly 7,500 veterans.

## How to apply for Energy Assistance

New applicants have until May 31, 2021 to apply, however funding is limited and administered on a first-come, first-served basis. The Minnesota Commerce Department administers the program in partnership with 29 local service providers throughout the state. Local service providers are situated across Minnesota and cover every corner of the state.

Households apply for assistance with the local service provider in their area. Call 800-657-3710, and press 1, or visit the [Commerce Department's Energy Assistance Program](#) webpage.

## About the Department of Commerce

The Minnesota Department of Commerce protects all Minnesotans in their everyday financial transactions by investigating and evaluating services and advocating that they be fair, accessible and affordable. In matters related to energy, the Department ensures an affordable and reliable energy system that minimizes impacts on the environment and reduces risks for utility customers. Learn more at [mn.gov/commerce](http://mn.gov/commerce).

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