



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

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PSC and DOA Urge Consumers to Seek Assistance Before Heating Season Begins

MADISON – The Public Service Commission (PSC) and the Department of Administration's Division of Energy are advising consumers to contact their local utility if their heat is disconnected and to apply for heating assistance through the state's Energy Assistance Program.

Wisconsin law states that consumers cannot be disconnected during the heating moratorium period from November 1 to April 15, if they are connected at the start of the moratorium.

Customers disconnected prior to the moratorium must make arrangements with their local utility to pay outstanding bills in order to have their service restored. If a consumer has not made arrangements to pay an outstanding bill, the utility is not required to provide heat until an agreed-upon payment schedule has been reached.

If a customer and utility cannot agree on a payment plan, consumers may contact the PSC's Consumer Affairs division which will review payment plans with the utility. Wisconsin law has established strict guidelines to protect households with persons who are elderly, infants, young children, seriously ill, or mentally or physically disabled from being disconnected without notice.

Customers who need assistance paying their heat or electric bills can contact the state's energy assistance program office in their county. The Division of Energy's Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) can assist eligible households with their energy bills. WHEAP is part of Wisconsin's comprehensive Home Energy Plus program, which also provides assistance with emergency energy needs, emergency furnace repairs, weatherization and conservation services. Eligibility is based on income and family size. For example, a family of four earning \$7,068 or less in the three months prior to applying for WHEAP may be eligible. For a two-person family, the earnings must be \$4,683 or less. Consumers do not have to be behind in their energy bill payments to qualify.

To make sure families have the heating assistance they need this winter, Governor Jim Doyle and the governors of 16 other states have called upon Congress to authorize an additional \$600 million in emergency funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) program. Additional funding is necessary because energy cost increases are outpacing increases in federal funding for the program. Today LIHEAP assists 5 million American families, down from 7 million at the program's outset 22 years ago.

More information on WHEAP and other Home Energy Plus services is available online at <http://homeenergyplus.wi.gov/>, calling toll free 866-HEATWIS (866-432-8947), or by asking your local utility representative about the program.

Consumers needing to schedule payments should call their utility. The phone numbers for the largest utilities in the state are listed below:

Alliant (800) 862-6222
Madison Gas & Electric (608) 252-7144
Superior Water, Light & Power Company (715) 395-6201
We Energies (800) 842-4565
Wisconsin Public Service Corporation (800) 450-7260
Xcel (800) 895-4999

Customers who wish to speak with a Public Service Commission Consumer Affairs Specialist may contact the PSC by calling (608) 266-2001 or toll free at (800) 225-7729.

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