



# Department of Administration Public Service Commission of Wisconsin



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## **DOA and PSC Urge Utility Customers to Seek Assistance Before Heating Season Begins** *Energy-saving Tips Help Consumers Lower Energy Bills*

**MADISON** – The Department of Administration’s (DOA) Division of Energy Services and the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) are urging energy customers to contact their local utility if their heat is currently disconnected. The agencies are also encouraging residents to take advantage of energy-efficiency programs and the state’s low-income bill payment assistance programs to reduce the burden of their utility bills this winter.

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 who are currently disconnected 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 reconnect the service until payment arrangements have been made.

### **Payment Agreements**

Consumers who need to set up a payment agreement should call their local utility. Phone numbers for the largest utilities in Wisconsin are listed below. If customers cannot reach an agreement with their utility, they may contact the PSC at 608-266-2001 or 1-800-225-7729.

Alliant Energy, 1-800-862-6222

Superior Water, Light & Power, 715-395-6201

Wisconsin Public Service, 1-800-450-7260

Madison Gas & Electric, 608-252-7144

We Energies 1-800-842-4565

Xcel Energy, 1-800-895-4999

### **Energy Assistance**

There is financial assistance available for eligible households who cannot pay their gas or electric bills this winter. The Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) administers low-income and energy assistance programs for the state. WHEAP is part of the state’s comprehensive Home Energy Plus program which also provides assistance with emergency energy needs, emergency furnace repairs, and weatherization and conservation services.

Eligibility is based on income and family size. For example, a family of four which earns \$7,950 or less in the three months prior to applying for assistance is potentially eligible. For a two-person family the earnings must be \$5,250 or less. Benefits are based on income levels and energy bills. Consumers do not have to be behind in their energy bill payments to qualify.

For information about WHEAP, including contact information for local energy assistance offices, please call 1-866-HEATWIS (1-866-432-8947) or visit <http://www.homeenergyplus.wi.gov>.

### **Energy-saving Tips**

Focus on Energy is the state's energy efficiency and renewable energy program. Focus on Energy can help customers make changes around the home so they can stay warm and comfortable this winter without spending more on their utility bills. By having a home energy evaluation conducted, Focus on Energy can help consumers identify ways to make their homes more efficient, which reduces their utility bills. Customers may also be eligible for Cash-Back Rewards if they implement the recommendations from the evaluation.

There are also simple steps consumers can take around the home to save energy during the winter months. These include:

- Open window coverings such as drapes, shades, and blinds to use the natural sunlight to heat your home or office, especially on the west and south. Close drapes and shades in the evening to prevent the heat from escaping.
- Close storm windows.
- Use plastic window coverings to reduce drafts through the window seals.
- Caulk and seal leaky window and door frames.
- Use furnaces and appliances that are ENERGY STAR® qualified.
- Use compact fluorescent light bulbs; they are 75% more efficient and last up to seven years.
- Use a programmable thermostat and set the temperature lower when you are away from home and warmer just before you return.
- Check that no objects are blocking the heating vents, preventing heat flow.
- Clean or replace filters on central air units, furnaces, and air handlers frequently, monthly during heating and cooling seasons.
- Close the damper in fireplaces when not in use.
- Close the doors and shut off registers in rooms not being used.
- Use cold water for doing laundry and washing dishes.
- Use the dishwasher only when it is fully loaded.
- Regularly clean the lint out of the dryer.

For more information about Focus on Energy, home energy audits and for more tips on saving energy around the home, please call 1-800-762-7077 or visit <http://focusonenergy.com>.

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