



Public Service Commission of Wisconsin

Eric Callisto, Chairperson
Mark Meyer, Commissioner
Lauren Azar, Commissioner

610 North Whitney Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854

For Immediate Release – October 4, 2010

Contact: Teresa Weidemann-Smith, (608) 266-9600

Consumers Urged to Seek Assistance before Heating Moratorium Begins

Heating moratorium begins November 1

MADISON – The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) urges energy consumers to contact their local utility if their heat is currently disconnected. The PSC also encourages residents to take advantage of energy-efficiency programs and the state's low-income bill payment assistance programs to reduce the burden of 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. Consumers who are currently disconnected must make arrangements with their local utility to pay outstanding bills in order to have 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.

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 consumers cannot reach an agreement with their utility, they may contact the PSC at 1-608-266-2001 or 1-800-225-7729.

Alliant Energy, 1-800-862-6222

Superior Water, Light & Power, 1-715-394-2200

Wisconsin Public Service Corp., 1-800-450-7260

Madison Gas & Electric, 1-608-252-7144

We Energies, 1-800-842-4565

Xcel Energy, 1-800-895-4999

Energy Assistance

Due to recent changes in program eligibility, many more households across the state may be eligible for heating assistance this winter. Consumers may qualify for assistance in paying their heating bills through the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP), which provides financial assistance to low-income residents. WHEAP is part of the state's comprehensive Home Energy Plus program which provides assistance with emergency energy needs, emergency furnace repairs, conservation service, and weatherizing for low-income households.

For the 2010-2011 heating season the income eligibility limit for WHEAP and Weatherization is 60% of the state median income level. This is the same limit used for the 2009-2010 program year. Prior to the 2009-2010 program year the income limit was based on 150% of the federal poverty level.

The State of Wisconsin anticipates nearly 237,000 households, about a 10% increase over last year, will receive energy assistance to pay a portion of their fuel costs this heating season.

Payments are based on household size, income level, home energy costs, and dwelling type and size. A family of four with an annual income of \$47,245 or less may be eligible for energy assistance. For more information about applying for the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP), call the Home Energy Plus hotline at 1-866-432-8947, or visit <http://www.homeenergyplus.wi.gov>.

Energy-saving Tips

Focus on Energy, the state's energy efficiency and renewable energy program, 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>.

(END)