

NEWS



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Merrillville, IN 46410

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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NIPSCO OFFERS HOME HEATING ASSISTANCE TO LOW-INCOME UTILITY CUSTOMERS

MERRILLVILLE, Ind. – Northern Indiana Public Service Company today reminds low-income customers with outstanding balances that a number of assistance programs and payment arrangements are available to help customers who are finding it difficult to pay their heating bill.

“We understand many of the challenges that our customers are facing, and it is our goal to keep customers connected so they can stay warm and be safe in their homes,” said Colleen Reilly, Director of Communications. “The amount of available energy assistance funds has increased this year, and we’re prepared to work together to get customers the assistance they need.”

Between Dec. 1 and March 15, natural gas utilities in Indiana do not disconnect service to customers enrolled in the state Energy Assistance Program and who are delinquent on their home heating bills.

In addition to funds available to EAP customers, nearly \$4.5 million remains available this year through NIPSCO’s Winter Warmth program. Since the program’s inception in 2004, Winter Warmth has provided nearly \$21.7 million in bill and deposit assistance to 55,522 customers.

“We want to do what we can to help our customers address payment issues. It’s imperative that any customer, regardless of income, call us with bill-payment trouble immediately so we have an opportunity to work together to get the customer the assistance they need or see if they qualify for a payment plan,” said Reilly.

Among the programs available to help customers are:

- **State Energy Assistance Program** – provides qualifying families with bill and crisis assistance. The maximum amount a household can receive is \$535, including a \$200 crisis grant. Household income must be at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level.

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HEATING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

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- **Winter Warmth Program** – provides qualifying natural gas customers with bill and deposit assistance. Qualifying customers will be eligible to receive up to \$450 in annual energy assistance. Eligibility requirements include those customers up to 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, in addition to those who have a financial hardship situation as determined by an administering Winter Warmth agency.
- **Gift of Warmth Fuel Fund** – provides eligible low-income customers whose incomes are at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, and who have received a disconnect notice, with heating bill assistance. NIPSCO matches agency contributions dollar for dollar.
- **Township Trustees** – provides customers with home heating bill assistance. Customers are encouraged to contact their local Township Trustee to see what help is available.

To learn more about available assistance, customers may call 1-800-4-NIPSCO (1-800-464-7726).

A complete listing of intake sites for the state Energy Assistance Program, Winter Warmth Program and Gift of Warmth Fuel Fund can be found on NIPSCO's Web site at www.nipsco.com by clicking "Manage Your Home Account" on the home page.

Editor's Note: A list of Winter Warmth agencies is attached.

NIPSCO, with headquarters in Merrillville, Ind., is one of the 10 energy distribution companies of NiSource Inc. (NYSE: NI). With over 712,000 natural gas customers and 457,000 electric customers across the northern third of Indiana, NIPSCO is the largest natural gas distribution company, and the second largest electric distribution company, in the state. NiSource distribution companies serve 3.8 million natural gas and electric customers primarily in seven states. More information about NIPSCO is available at www.nipsco.com.

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