

More Minnesotans to receive energy assistance with additional LIHEAP funding

Written by

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The state will receive an additional \$14.1 million in federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds for the Minnesota Energy Assistance Program (EAP) announced Commerce Commissioner Mike Rothman.

“This is welcome news Minnesota families as we head into the Holiday weekend,” said Commissioner Rothman. These funds came through at a crucial time for thousands of seniors, disabled Minnesotans, and low-income families with children who are struggling to pay their heating bills this winter.”

The Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources (DER) reported it would serve approximately 128,000 households with an initial \$73.5 million in funding provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). DER has already received more than 140,000 applications from households requesting assistance this winter, with funding running out this month. The additional \$14.1 million released to Minnesota today may help serve approximately 19,000 additional Minnesota households this winter.

“The average household income of families enrolled in this program is around \$16,000 per year,” said Rothman. “For many low-income families, Minnesota’s Energy Assistance Program is a financial lifeline through these cold winter months. And in this economy, the need is greater than ever.”

EAP applications have increased 2.2 percent this year compared to the same time last year, and have increased 9 percent compared to the same time two years ago. The program helps low-income households pay their heating bills through grant money paid directly to the utility company on behalf of the customer. DER allocates these funds to 36 local service providers who work with households to distribute the funds.

Last year, Minnesota served 172,065 households with \$152 million in federal funds. This year the average grant per household is about \$400. Customers with 50 percent or less of the state median income (\$43,050 for a family of four) may qualify. Households with seniors, people with disabilities, and families with children are especially encouraged to apply.

Qualifying families must apply for assistance at the local service provider in their area. Funding is limited and is administered on a first-come-first-serve basis.

A list of local service providers and more information about the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program can be found at www.staywarm.mn.gov by clicking on “Finding Financial Assistance” or by calling 651-296-5175 or toll free in Minnesota 1-800-657-3710.