

LOCALNEWS

State receives millions for energy program

Low-income Minnesotans encouraged to apply for heating assistance

COMMERCE REPORT

Eligible low-income homeowners and renters will get help paying their heating bills thanks to \$103 million in federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program funds provided for Minnesota's Energy Assistance Program.

The Minnesota Department of Commerce said this week the funds will help pay for heating bills through grant money paid directly to

utility companies and heating fuel vendors on behalf of eligible households.

"Year after year, the Energy Assistance Program has helped Minnesotans who struggle to pay for home heating stay warm throughout the winter," said Commerce Commissioner Mike Rothman. "As we experienced with last year's brutally cold winter combined with high propane prices and a propane shortage, the LIHEAP funds are critical for keeping thousands of households from losing



Mike Rothman

heat."

The Commerce Department administers EAP in partnership with 31 local service providers throughout the state. EAP is federally funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The program helps renters and homeowners who earn less than 50 percent of the state's median income — \$44,912 for a family of four — obtain grant money to help pay their heating bills.

Last year, Minnesota served 156,033 households with \$114,970,880 in federal funds. When the propane crisis and cold weather spiked demand for EAP last winter, the Legislature and Governor Mark Dayton responded by providing the

additional \$20 million in state funds.

EAP assisted more than 59,000 households in "emergency" situations — either no-heat or near no-heat situations — restore heat or avert loss of heat with about \$30 million of its funds. A total of 26,937 propane users received EAP funding last year, representing 18 percent of all EAP recipients. This included 16,454 propane households in emergency situations. The average grant per household was \$485.

"Energy bills take a big bite out of household budgets and leave many Minnesotans stretching every dollar to make ends meet," said Rothman. "We encourage all Minnesotans who

may have difficulty paying their heating bills to apply for EAP. Households that include children under the age of six, people with disabilities, veterans, and seniors are especially encouraged to apply."

How to apply

Local service providers have reviewed thousands of applications for EAP already this fall, and payments for many who qualified will begin as early as this week. There is still plenty of time for new applicants and for those who qualified last year to reapply, but funding is limited and administered on a first-come, first-served basis. Applications will be taken until June 1, 2015, or until funds run out.

Qualifying households must apply for assistance at the local service provider in their area. Interested households should contact their local service provider by calling 1-800-657-3710 or visiting the Energy Assistance section of the Commerce Department's website.

In addition to applying for EAP, low-income Minnesotans served by utilities are encouraged to contact their utility and seek protection under the Cold Weather Rule. To prevent heating disconnection during the rule—from Oct. 15, 2014 to April 15, 2015—customers must contact their utility to establish and maintain a monthly payment plan.



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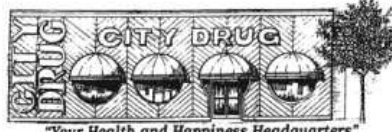
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Paid for by the Elect Joe Schwartz Committee, Darlene Walls, Treasurer
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In Memory of

Richard Hedtke

To everyone who has supported us following the death of Richard, we would like to express our sincere appreciation and thanks. Your many acts of kindness, sympathy and support continue to be a comfort to us in our time of sorrow.

We also send our gratitude and thanks to Pastor Jacob Quast for the beautiful service, Joe Belanger for the music and the St Paul Lutheran Ladies Aid for the lunch after the service.

A special thank you to our grandchildren, Cooper, Nicholas, Taylor and Colin for being honorary pallbearers.

Karen Hedtke and family



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