



National Fuel Funds Network

1010 Vermont Ave., NW, #718

Washington, DC 20005

202 824-0638 (fax), 202 824-0660 (phone)

info@nationalfuelfunds.org www.nationalfuelfunds.org

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Dear Member: As winter's cold begins to take effect across the nation, many areas are reporting increased demand for energy assistance. News reports from the Northeast to the Pacific Northwest point to long lines at application centers and large numbers of first time applicants.

In Connecticut, the state has received nearly 67,000 applications since August and has approved 47,000. In addition, Operation Fuel has provided aid to another 600 households. "We handled over 100 applications the first day we opened for business, said Pat Wrice, Operation Fuel's executive director. "That's more than double the number last year. Just goes to show you the need."

In Dane County, Wisconsin, Energy Services, Inc. reported that 8,000 households received assistance last winter while after two months this winter 6,000 households have gotten help. The agency said 30 percent were first time applicants.

The Crisis Assistance Ministry in Charlotte, NC reported that the number of families seeking emergency rent and utility assistance in September was triple the number a year ago. Raquel Lynch, director of information technology, project management, and advocacy for the Ministry, said nearly 3500 applicants had sought assistance this September compared with slightly more than 1000 families last year.

As we prepare for **LIHEAP Action Day** we need to hear from you. Let us know what is going on in your community. The information you provide now will go a long way to help us make our case to Congress on **February 11**. To register for NFFN's LIHEAP Action Day and sponsor or purchase ad book space for the Network's 25th Anniversary Gala on February 10, visit www.nationalfuelfunds.org.

State Government Actions

- New Jersey Governor Jon Corzine has signed legislation that provides \$10 million in funding to expand NJSHARES assistance to include those using deliverable fuels, such as oil, to heat their homes.

Jim Jacob, executive director of NJSHARES, said “We are very grateful to Governor Corzine and the legislature for their recognition of the crisis facing thousands of households across our state. The bill...will provide direct and meaningful assistance to families in crisis. This bill will also allow NJSHARES to assist deliverable fuel customers for the first time.”

The legislation also appropriates \$3 million for the state’s Hunger Initiative and Food Assistance Program and \$9.5 million for foreclosure legal assistance.

Utility Actions

- Laclede Gas recently co-sponsored three Health & Energy Conservation Expos in St. Louis Metropolitan Area. The Expos offered health screenings and made weatherization materials available for all attendees. The Expos’ other co-sponsors were Affordable Comfort, AmerenUE, CAA of St. Louis County/City, Laclede Gas, Metropolitan Sewer District, MO American Water Co. and MPSC.

LIHEAP

- Three state energy groups have written to President-elect Obama seeking increased funding for LIHEAP, Weatherization, and the State Energy Program for the current fiscal year.

The letter, signed by the chairs of the National Association of State Energy Officials, the National Energy Assistance Directors Association, and the National Association for State Community Services Programs, requests an additional \$2.5 billion for LIHEAP, \$500 million for Weatherization and \$75 million for the State Energy Program.

The groups ask that the funds be included in the Obama administration’s economic stimulus package.

Weatherization and Energy Efficiency

- The National Community Action Foundation has announced its support for the use of an expanded weatherization program to help stimulate the nation’s flagging economy.

In a statement submitted to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, NCAF executive director David Bradley said “We support, and our membership can deliver, a \$2 billion two-year “Weatherization Stimulus” initiative that can sustain more than 47 000 annual homebuilding industry jobs over two years while giving very low-income consumers \$ 350-500 in annual savings to use for other necessities.”

- Employees of Laclede Gas in St. Louis weatherized 25 homes as part of the company’s annual volunteer weatherization project. The home prospects were provided by the major Community Action Agency of St. Louis City and St. Louis County.
- The St. Louis Chapter of the American Association of Blacks in Energy recently held its first annual Energy Efficiency Information Event. The event, which was designed to aid the low income community during this heating season, drew more than 125 people. Vendors participating in the event included Community Action Agencies City/County, Metropolitan Sewer District, Ameren, St. Louis Area on Aging, Heat Up St. Louis, Urban League, Mary One Realty-Green House and Laclede Gas.

Foundation Actions

- The Wal-Mart Foundation has given a \$100,000 grant to Ohio’s Home Energy Assistance Program to help low income families pay their utility bills. The Foundation also announced a \$300,000 grant to the Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks.

The grants were provided under a new Wal-Mart Foundation State Giving Program, which awards grants at the state and regional levels to support unmet needs.

- The Foundation Center has developed an interactive national map that allows users to research foundation grants awarded anywhere in the United States. By clicking on a state, the user can determine the number of grants awarded and their cash value.

The site also provides detailed information on the organization receiving the grant as well as the group providing the grant. Click on this link to visit the site -- http://maps.foundationcenter.org/economic_crisis/RecipTypeUS.php?source=subj&kind=recip&y0=All&tAll=All.

Reports and Forecasts

- One in five households were behind on its utility bills at the end of last winter and one in 20 households had its utility service terminated in 2007, according to a survey by the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners.

Electric customers who were overdue owed an average of \$157 in May 2008, when most wintertime service shutoff moratoria ended, while overdue natural-gas customers owed an average of \$360.

The “2008 NARUC Collections Survey” is available on the organization’s website – www.naruc.org.

- Residential heating oil prices during this current heating season are projected to average \$2.53 per gallon, a reduction of 24 percent from the 2007-2008 heating season, according to the latest *Short Term Energy Outlook* released by the Energy Information Administration. Residential propane prices are projected to average \$2.10 this winter, a decrease of 14 percent from last winter. Residential natural gas prices are projected to average \$12.56 per thousand cubic feet (Mcf), a decrease of 1.3 percent from last winter.