

National Fuel Funds Network

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Energy Safety Net Took Kit #6

Dear NFFN Member, National Fire Prevention Week begins October 6 and this presents an excellent opportunity to highlight the role that energy assistance programs can play in helping to prevent residential fires and fire related deaths.

One of the major factors in residential fires is the use of unsafe and dangerous methods of heating and lighting homes. Energy assistance programs can help people avoid utility cut-offs and reduce the use of dangerous means to maintain a livable home.

The NFFN has prepared Energy Safety Net Tool Kit #6 designed to help you spotlight the work done by your program during National Fire Prevention Week. Energy Safety Net Tool Kit #6 contains a press release from the NFFN and a draft letter to the editor.

We ask that you send the press release to your local media – newspapers, television and radio stations – at the start of National Fire Prevention Week. We also suggest that you print the letter to the editor on your program's stationary, sign it and submit to your local newspaper for publication.

Please feel free to add any information about your particular assistance program that you think is important to the letter.

For more information about National Fire Safety Week, you can visit the National Fire Prevention Association homepage at www.nfpa.org.

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October 6, 2002

For Immediate Release

Fuel Funds Chairman Calls for Greater Support of Energy Assistance Programs to Reduce House Fires and Fire Related Deaths

National Fuel Funds Network Chairman Carol Clements today urged greater support for both federally funded and charitably supported energy assistance programs as a means of reducing residential fires and fire related deaths.

In a statement released for the beginning of National Fire Prevention Week, Ms. Clements said “the use of dangerous methods of heating and lighting homes is one of the leading factors in home fires and fire related deaths. This week provides an opportunity to spotlight the existing assistance programs that could help to reduce this problem.”

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), portable and fixed space heaters accounted for roughly two of every three (65%) home heating fires in 1998 and three of every four (76%) associated deaths.

“Help is available that can forestall utility cut-offs,” Clements said, “but more funds are needed to meet the demand.” She pointed out that the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) currently serves only about 20 percent of the eligible households.

“Charitable assistance programs like fuel funds and energy banks raise or administer about \$104 million and help at least 1.8 million households each heating season,” she said, “but that is still not enough to meet the need.”

Ms. Clements called on the Congress and the President to increase funding for LIHEAP to \$3.4 billion annually. In addition, she said “At a time when Americans are rediscovering the importance of helping their neighbors, we all should give more to the fuel funds and other charitably funded energy assistance programs in our communities.”

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DRAFT

Dear Editor

The use of unsafe methods of heating and lighting homes is a one of the leading factors in residential fires and fatalities. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), portable and fixed space heaters accounted for roughly two of every three (65%) home heating fires in 1998 and three of every four (76%) associated deaths.

This week, National Fire Prevention Week, provides us with an opportunity to spotlight the existing energy assistance programs that could help to prevent these home fires and fire related deaths. We know the scenario all too well – unpaid utility bills and arrearages lead to cut-offs and finally, in some instances, the use of dangerous and sometimes deadly methods of providing heat and light in the home.

Currently there are programs and resources available to help people maintain their utility service and avoid resorting to unsafe practices, but these programs can only assist a fraction of the people in need.

The federally funded Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) provides assistance to about 5.3 million households annually but that is only about 20 percent of the number of eligible households. Charitable assistance programs like fuel funds and energy banks try to fill the gap left by LIHEAP, but they cannot come near meeting the overall demand for assistance. Fuel funds raise or administer about \$104 million and help at least 1.8 million households each heating season.

To help keep our fellow Americans from having to make dangerous choices, funding for LIHEAP should be increased to \$3.4 billion annually. At a time when we, as a nation, are rediscovering the importance of helping our neighbors, we should all make a contribution to our local fuel fund.