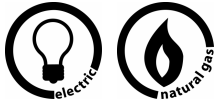




## Energy Assistance Programs: Help with Paying Your Utility Bills

Having trouble paying your utility bill? A number of programs are available to help you.



### Energy Assistance Programs

Assistance is available for both gas and electric bills. The assistance may be in the form of a reduction of your heating bill and/or a set amount based on your income to be paid each month. Eligibility for these programs is based on a household's income. One or more of the following programs may be right for you.

Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP)

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

Winter Crisis Program—formerly Emergency Energy Assistance Program (E-HEAP)

Extended Payment Plans

### Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) 2005-2006

PIPP allows eligible customers to make affordable energy payments. PIPP actually has several programs: the Standard PIPP Program, the PIPP Balanced Payment Plan, Three Percent PIPP, and the Arrearage Crediting Program. Please note that PIPP customers are not eligible to choose their own supplier; however all PIPP customers in their respective service territories are bid out as a class to competitive gas suppliers in order to achieve maximum savings.

#### Standard PIPP Program

The Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) allows eligible customers to make lower energy payments. If you qualify, you can pay 10 percent of your gross monthly household income to the utility company providing your main heating source and five percent to the utility company providing your secondary heating source. You can choose to join PIPP for only one utility service. If the company provides both gas and electric services or if the customer has an all-electric home, the payment is 15 percent of the gross monthly income.

#### How do I qualify for PIPP?

- Your utility company must be regulated by the PUCO;
- You must apply for all energy assistance for which you are eligible; and,
- You must have a gross yearly household income at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level (see Income Eligibility chart below). If you are not eligible based on the 12-month "test," you may qualify for PIPP based on your income for the most recent three months.

## Eligibility Chart for 2005-2006

| Size of household | Yearly gross household income | Three month income |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 person          | Up to \$14,355                | Up to \$3,589      |
| 2 persons         | Up to \$19,245                | Up to \$4,811      |
| 3 persons         | Up to \$24,135                | Up to \$6,034      |
| 4 persons         | Up to \$29,025                | Up to \$7,256      |
| 5 persons         | Up to \$33,915                | Up to \$8,479      |
| 6 persons         | Up to \$38,805                | Up to \$9,701      |

For households with more than six people, add \$4,890 per person for 12 months or \$1,223 for three months.

### How do I sign up for PIPP?

Contact your gas or electric company for specific details. The company may refer you to the local community action agency (CAA) to enroll in PIPP. Proof of your gross monthly household income for the last three months will be required. The first PIPP payment is usually due at the time you enroll.

### What do I need to do to stay on PIPP?

- Make the required monthly payments;
- Re-verify gross monthly household income a minimum of once every 12 months;
- Reapply for all available energy assistance programs at least every 12 months;
- Apply for weatherization if you are contacted by a utility or state agency representative.

### When do I pay the PIPP amount or the current bill?

Electric Customers:

During the heating season, November 1, 2004, through April 15, 2005, you would pay the percentage of income payment. During the non-heating season, April 16, 2005, through October 31, 2005, you would pay your current bill or the PIPP amount, whichever is higher.

Gas Customers:

PIPP customers who use natural gas as the primary heating source will pay the ten percent PIPP payment year-round.

An example of payment:

Mr. Jones has a \$500 monthly household income. He would pay \$50 per month (10 percent of his household income) year-round to the gas company. In the winter, Mr. Jones pays the electric company \$25, (five percent of his household income). However, in the summer, his electric bill may be higher than the \$25. When this happens, he must pay the higher amount to stay on PIPP and to keep his electric service on.

**What do I do if my service is disconnected for non-payment?**

You would have to reapply for PIPP, pay any missed payments (default), and may have to pay a reconnection charge and/or a security deposit.

**What if I want to discontinue PIPP?**

You may request to be taken off the plan at any time. The company may require that this request be in writing. If you are no longer income eligible for PIPP, the company is required to place you on the Arrearage Crediting Program. You may find it convenient to remove yourself from PIPP prior to becoming income ineligible. In this instance, you will need to contact your utility company to make appropriate arrangements on the balance due.

**PIPP Balanced Payment Plan (Electric Companies Only)**

The PIPP Balanced Payment Plan is only offered by electric and combination utility companies. This plan provides an option of budgeting monthly electric bills so payments do not dramatically increase during the summer. The PIPP Balanced Payment Plan is based on winter PIPP payments and summer actual usage. Consult with your local utility company or Community Action Agency representatives at the time you enroll in PIPP for more details.

**Three Percent PIPP**

If your household is at or below 50 percent of the federal poverty level and the household uses electricity as its secondary source of heat, your household would pay three percent instead of five percent in the winter heating season only.

The PIPP Balanced Payment Plan and Three Percent PIPP payments are not available at Cleveland Electric Illuminating and Toledo Edison due to an existing low-income rate.

**50 Percent Income Eligibility Chart for 3 Percent Electric Customers**

| Size of household | Yearly gross household income | Three month income |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 person          | Up to \$4,785                 | Up to \$1,196      |
| 2 persons         | Up to \$6,415                 | Up to \$1,604      |
| 3 persons         | Up to \$8,045                 | Up to \$2,011      |
| 4 persons         | Up to \$9,675                 | Up to \$2,419      |
| 5 persons         | Up to \$11,305                | Up to \$2,826      |
| 6 persons         | Up to \$12,935                | Up to \$3,234      |

For households with more than six people, add \$1,630 per person for 12 months or \$403 for three months.

If you were a participant in this program in past years or are elderly and seeking some energy assistance, please contact the Office of Community Services.

## Arrearage Crediting Program

Arrearage Crediting is available to PIPP customers who are no longer income eligible for PIPP. The Arrearage Crediting Program assists you with gradually paying off your total arrearage amount. Current and former PIPP customers should contact their local utility company for specific information on the rules and regulations of arrearage crediting. Following are the arrearage crediting guidelines:

- You continue to pay your PIPP payment amount for the first 12 months after losing PIPP eligibility.
- Beginning on the 13th month after losing PIPP eligibility, you stop paying your PIPP amount and start paying the amount due on your monthly bills for the next 12 months.
- At the end of the second year off of PIPP, you pay your current bill plus an extra arrearage payment (not to exceed \$20). This payment goes towards paying off the total arrearage amount due.
- Once you begin paying the current bill and your arrearage payment, you will be eligible to receive matching credit equal to your arrearage payment. The utility company will determine how often this credit will be applied to your account. The arrearage credit from the company will be applied to your bills as long as the monthly bill is paid in a timely manner.

*Cleveland Electric Illuminating, Dayton Power & Light, and Toledo Edison are excluded from this crediting system. However, all of these companies have crediting systems somewhat similar to the one described above.*

## Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

### What is HEAP?

HEAP is a federally funded program administered by the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD). It is designed to help eligible low-income Ohioans meet the high costs of home heating. HEAP pays a one-time payment for most PUCO-regulated utility customers reflecting their usage for the current winter heating season.

### Who is eligible?

Any customer whose total household income meets these guidelines:

### Eligibility Chart for 2005-2006

| Size of household | Yearly gross household income | Three month income |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 person          | Up to \$16,748                | Up to \$4,187      |
| 2 persons         | Up to \$22,453                | Up to \$5,613      |
| 3 persons         | Up to \$28,158                | Up to \$7,039      |
| 4 persons         | Up to \$33,863                | Up to \$8,465      |
| 5 persons         | Up to \$39,568                | Up to \$9,892      |
| 6 persons         | Up to \$45,273                | Up to \$11,318     |
| 7 persons         | Up to \$50,978                | Up to \$12,744     |
| 8 persons         | Up to \$56,683                | Up to \$14,171     |

For households with more than eight people, add \$5,705 per person for 12 months or \$1,426 for three months.

### **How do you apply for HEAP?**

By calling HEAP at:

(Toll-free) (800) 282-0880      (TDD Toll-free) (800) 686-1557  
(in Columbus) (614) 644-6600    (TDD in Columbus) (614) 752-8808

By writing to HEAP at:

P.O. Box 1240, Columbus, Ohio 43266-0583

By obtaining a HEAP application from county-based Community Action Agencies, post offices, or libraries.

*Note: Each household should mail only one HEAP application.*

## **Winter Crisis Program (formerly Emergency Energy Assistance Program -- E-HEAP)**

### **What is the Winter Crisis Program?**

A special component of HEAP, the Winter Crisis Program (WCP), is administered by Community Action Agencies (CAA) throughout Ohio. The WCP provides assistance *once* per heating season to eligible low-income households that are disconnected, threatened with disconnection, or have less than a ten-day supply of bulk fuel. For further information, contact your local Community Action Agency.

## **Extended Payment Plans**

PUCO-regulated gas and electric companies have the following extended payment plans available to allow you to make affordable payments and maintain service:

- The One-Third Plan (November 1 – April 15)
- The One-Sixth Plan
- Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP)
- Budget Payment Plan

The one-third, one-sixth and budget payment plans are available to all residential customers regardless of income. PIPP is only available for those customers who meet the income guidelines. For more information, contact your utility company or your local Community Action Agency. You may also call the PUCO's Public Interest Center toll-free: Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., EST:

(800) 686-7826 (voice)

(800) 686-1570 (TDD)

Some utility companies may offer other emergency assistance plans. For more information, please contact your utility company.

## **Budget Billing for Natural Gas and Electric Service: How it Works**

Fluctuating energy prices can have a dramatic influence on monthly energy bills. In addition to following conservation tips and considering competitive supplier options, consumers can take advantage of budget billing to offset increased energy costs for heating during the winter months and cooling during the summer months.

Budget billing is a program, offered by Ohio's regulated electric and natural gas distribution companies, that spreads out the cost of energy used during high-demand times of the year. Instead of seeing an increase in winter heating bills or summer cooling bills, budget billing breaks down total yearly usage into manageable monthly bills.

### **How does budget billing work?**

Your utility company will review your usage history. Based on that information and expected energy prices, the company will determine your budget amount. You will pay that amount throughout the budget billing period, which usually runs from August through July. Some companies offer different programs, such as quarterly budget billing.

At the end of the budget period the company will review your actual usage. You will then receive a bill for an amount that may be higher or lower than your budget amount. This is called a "true-up" or settlement. The true-up makes sure that what you paid on the budget plan matches what you actually used during the budget period. You may either receive a credit if you paid too much during the budget period, or have to pay the difference if you did not pay enough during the budget period.

The company will then adjust your budget payment for the next period based on the previous period's actual usage.

### **What happens if energy prices decrease or increase during the budget period, or if I use more energy than was expected?**

During the budget period, your utility company may review your budget amount, usage, and energy prices. The utility company may make adjustments to your budget amount so that your budget amount more accurately reflects your usage and energy prices. At the end of the budget year, when you receive your true-up amount, any over or under collection will be taken care of at that time.

### **How do I sign up for budget billing?**

Contact your natural gas or electric utility company. They can provide you with specific information. Each utility company may have different budget periods and budget plans available. Be sure to ask when the budget period begins and when adjustments to your budget amount can be made.

Since budget periods usually begin in August, the later in the year you sign up, the higher your budget amount will be.

## **Energy Assistance for Military Personnel and their Families**

The Patriot Plan, a new program providing protections and benefits to military personnel and their families, can assist qualifying customers with maintaining utility service while serving on active duty. Under the plan, Ohio's natural gas and electric utilities cannot disconnect the residential utility service of any military reservist or National Guardsman deployed on active duty for nonpayment.

Upon return from active duty, utility companies must offer customers a period of time equal to the length of their deployment to pay any arrearages that may have accumulated. Additional time may be requested by a customer if the amount in arrearages presents a hardship. Utility companies are also prohibited from charging any late payment fees or interest to qualifying customers during the period of deployment or the repayment period.

The Patriot Plan does not apply to career active-duty military personnel serving their regular tour of duty. For additional information regarding this benefit, contact your local utility company or the PUCO at (800) 686-PUCO (7826).

**If you would like to know more about the PUCO or have utility-related questions or concerns,**

**contact the PUCO at:**

**(800) 686-PUCO (7826)**

**(800) 686-1570 (TDD/TTY)**

**In Columbus only:**

**(614) 466-3292**

**(614) 466-8180 (TDD/TTY)**

**[www.PUCO.ohio.gov](http://www.PUCO.ohio.gov)**