



For Immediate Release

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Winter Heating Season is Here, But It's Not Too Late to Prepare

All consumers should be aware of the tools they can use to mitigate winter heating bills, with utilities throughout Indiana and the United States projecting higher energy costs over the next few months.

Financial Assistance

If you need financial assistance, resources are available.

- The federally funded Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) assists qualifying consumers each winter.
 - State statute protects participating customers, and those who have applied for LIHEAP, from disconnection from Dec. 1 through Mar. 15.
 - Consumers can learn more and apply on the Indiana Housing & Community Development Authority's (IHCDA's) website at www.in.gov/ihcda/homeowners-and-renters/low-income-home-energy-assistance-program-liheap.
 - IHCDA's site also has contact information for LIHEAP intake offices in each Indiana county. It also has information on income qualifications.
- Consumers without internet access may call IHCDA toll-free at 1-800-872-0371 for more information on LIHEAP. Consumers who qualify for LIHEAP also qualify for a Low-Income Household Water Assistance program (LIHWAP).
- Local township trustees provide assistance throughout the state.
- Many utilities offer their own assistance programs. Help through local charities may also be available.
- Consumers seeking financial assistance should call 2-1-1, the state's help line which is available 24 hours a day. Indiana 211 can connect you with local level resources.

Billing Options and Payment Plans

All utility consumers, including those protected by the moratorium and/or receiving financial assistance, are strongly encouraged to continue to pay heating bills each month, even if they can only make partial payments.

"If you are behind on your bills or concerned about your ability to pay, it's important to contact your utilities right away to seek payment arrangements you can afford," said Indiana Utility Consumer Counselor Bill Fine. "If you or someone you know needs assistance or a payment arrangement, it is time to ask for help now, and not wait."

In addition to payment arrangements, many utilities offer budget billing, which provides a consistent monthly payment. The utility sets the monthly amount over a specific period – normally a year – based on the customer's expected usage. A true-up is applied in the 12th month, with a credit or balance typically applied to the next year. A key benefit to budget billing is that it can provide month-to-month consistency throughout the winter, and help consumers avoid the sticker shock they may otherwise experience.

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Energy Efficiency

Taking steps to improve a home's energy efficiency can help save consumers money, as well.

Now is a great time to schedule a home heating system tune-up and investigate other savings steps like changing your HVAC filter regularly, replacing old weather stripping, and turning ceiling fans to rotate clockwise for the winter months. The OUCC offers more energy efficiency tips at www.in.gov/oucc/natural-gas/tips-and-publications/reduce-your-winter-energy-bills/.

Additional resources include online home energy audits and specific programs offered by utilities. Learn more at www.in.gov/oucc/featured-topics/winter-bills-faq.

Data Reporting

Eight Indiana electric and natural gas utilities – including five of the state's six largest energy utilities – have agreed to share monthly disconnection and arrearage data with the OUCC for September 2022 through March 2024. More information is available at www.in.gov/oucc/featured-topics/arrearage-and-disconnection-data-investigation, including data from September 2022.

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The Indiana Office of Utility Consumer Counselor (OUCC) represents Indiana consumer interests before state and federal bodies that regulate utilities. As a state agency, the OUCC's mission is to represent all Indiana consumers to ensure quality, reliable utility services at the most reasonable prices possible through dedicated advocacy, consumer education, and creative problem solving.