

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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NIPSCO's Proposal to Fill Gap in Winter Bill Assistance Receives Approval
\$2.1 million to help with expected shortfall in federal program

MERRILLVILLE, Ind. – The Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission (IURC) approved part of a proposal recently made by NIPSCO to help fill the expected shortfall in available funds as a result of cuts in federal funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) across the country – a program that offers much needed winter heating assistance locally for qualified NIPSCO households that are experiencing financial challenges.

LIHEAP support – which has been in existence for 30 years – is available to households falling within 150 percent of federal poverty guidelines, and is fully funded by a federal block grant offered through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

With expected federal cuts amounting to an anticipated 27 percent shortfall this winter from last year's available LIHEAP funds for NIPSCO customers, the company proposed that \$2.1 million in unused funds from an expired utility assistance program be allowed to help offset the cuts.

The approved \$2.1 million is expected to help approximately 8,000 homes throughout NIPSCO's service area that would not have received help without these additional funds.

"This decision comes at a critical time as we head into the heart of the winter heating season," said Cindy Jackson, manager of energy efficiency and energy assistance programs for NIPSCO. "These programs are vital to the safety and well-being of thousands of individuals and families, especially to elderly, disabled and low-income customers, as well as those hit hardest by the economy."

AVAILABLE LIHEAP ASSISTANCE

General enrollment began Nov. 1, and funds are administered by the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) and spread across northern Indiana through Community Action Agencies with outreach offices in each county.

Last year, more than 46,000 NIPSCO customers participated in LIHEAP. The level of assistance is based on several factors, including family size, income status and dwelling type.

Between Dec. 1 and March 15, natural gas utilities in Indiana do not disconnect service to customers enrolled in LIHEAP who are delinquent on their home heating bills.

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NIPSCO FILLS LIHEAP GAP

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Eligible applicants should contact their local Community Action Agency. A listing of agencies by county can be found at NIPSCO.com/paymentassistance, and customers are encouraged to contact the agency for a complete list of required documentation ahead of visiting in person.

NIPSCO CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE FOR RESIDENTIAL ENERGY (CARE) DISCOUNT PROGRAM

In addition to the assistance available through LIHEAP, the NIPSCO CARE discount program is designed to provide further bill reductions to LIHEAP-eligible customers. Once enrolled in LIHEAP, customers are automatically enrolled in the program, and reductions range from 11 to 26 percent, depending on the same criteria used by the state in determining the level of assistance.

NIPSCO HARDSHIP PROGRAM

For customers just outside the federal poverty guidelines for LIHEAP, the NIPSCO Hardship Program offers up to \$200 in gas bill assistance to households between 151-200 percent of the federal poverty level. Hardship funds are available through many of the same local Community Action Agencies where LIHEAP funds are distributed.

TOWNSHIP TRUSTEES

A limited amount of energy assistance funds are available through local Township Trustee offices. Last year, approximately \$1.2 million was distributed to help nearly 7,000 customers. NIPSCO customers are encouraged to contact their local Township Trustee to see what help is available.

“Regardless of income levels, it’s important that any customer with bill-payment trouble contact NIPSCO immediately to discuss potential assistance options,” added Jackson.

For more information on available payment assistance programs, customers are encouraged to visit NIPSCO.com/paymentassistance. For more information on available energy-saving programs and other ways to save, visit NIPSCO.com/SaveEnergy.

NIPSCO, with headquarters in Merrillville, Ind., is one of the seven energy distribution companies of NiSource Inc. (NYSE: NI). With more than 786,000 natural gas customers and 457,000 electric customers across the northern third of Indiana, NIPSCO is the largest natural gas distribution company, and the second largest electric distribution company, in the state. NiSource distribution companies serve 3.8 million natural gas and electric customers primarily in seven states. More information about NIPSCO is available at www.nipsco.com.

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