



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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ENERGY ASSISTANCE OPTIONS AVAILABLE FOR NIPSCO CUSTOMERS

MERRILLVILLE, Ind. – With the state’s moratorium ending March 15, Northern Indiana Public Service Company reminds low-income customers with outstanding balances that a number of assistance programs and payment arrangements are available to help customers with their utility bills.

Between Dec. 1 and March 15, natural gas utilities in Indiana do not disconnect service to customers enrolled in the state Energy Assistance Program (EAP) who are delinquent on their home heating bills.

“Fortunately, with gas prices being significantly less this winter heating season, we have seen a considerable drop in the amount of customers who have fallen behind on their bill,” said Guy Ausmus, Senior Vice President of Customer Engagement for NIPSCO. “Assistance funds are still available for customers who meet specific income guidelines. But, it’s imperative that any customer, regardless of income, call us with bill-payment trouble immediately so we have an opportunity to work together to get the customer the assistance they need or see if they qualify for a payment plan.”

While the overall number of customers receiving state energy assistance dollars has seen little change from last year, the number of customers who have fallen behind on their utility bills has dropped more than 50 percent from last year at this time.

In addition to funds available to EAP customers, nearly \$5.5 million remains available this year through NIPSCO’s Winter Warmth program. Over the past seven years, Winter Warmth has provided nearly \$26 million in assistance to more than 70,000 customers.

Among the programs available to help customers are:

- **State Energy Assistance Program** – provides qualifying families with bill and crisis assistance. The maximum amount a household can receive is \$715, including a \$200 crisis grant. Household income must be at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level.
- **Winter Warmth Program** – provides qualifying customers with up to \$450 in annual energy assistance. Eligibility requirements include those customers up to 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, in addition to those who have a financial hardship situation as determined by an administering Winter Warmth agency.

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**HEATING ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE
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- **Gift of Warmth Fuel Fund** – provides eligible low-income customers whose incomes are at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, and who have received a disconnect notice, with heating bill assistance. NIPSCO matches agency contributions dollar for dollar.
- **Township Trustees** – provides customers with home heating bill assistance. Customers are encouraged to contact their local Township Trustee to see what help is available.

To learn more about available assistance, customers may call 1-800-4-NIPSCO (1-800-464-7726).

A complete listing of intake sites for the state Energy Assistance Program, Winter Warmth Program and Gift of Warmth Fuel Fund can be found on NIPSCO's Web site at NIPSCO.com by clicking "Billing and Payment" on the home page.

Editor's Note: A list of Winter Warmth agencies is attached.

NIPSCO, with headquarters in Merrillville, Ind., is one of the 10 energy distribution companies of NiSource Inc. (NYSE: NI). With over 712,000 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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