# Winter Energy Costs

## Task Force Report

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Fall 2008

Putting Massachusetts in a stronger position to contend with winter heating costs

Photo: *Boston area under snow, March 3, 2005*, ESA/NASA

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# Introduction

On July 23, 2008, Governor Deval Patrick, Senate President Therese Murray, and House Speaker Salvatore DiMasi launched the Winter Energy Costs Task Force. It was mid-summer, but the price of home heating oil had just hit an all-time high. Although the price had been rising steadily over the course of last winter, it rose even more sharply after the heating season ended, reaching $4.71 in early July. Suddenly, the prospect of thousands of residents unable to meet the skyrocketing cost of heating their homes this winter appeared on the horizon – a potential crisis in the making.

Since then, prices of heating fuels have fallen, with oil now down to $3.14 a gallon, 31 cents higher than a year ago at this time and slightly below the average for the past heating season . While a relief, it is sobering to note that it took a financial crisis of historic proportions to bring fuel prices down to that level, as commodity markets projected slack demand from a slowing global economy. If nothing else, the roller-coaster ride of the past year demonstrates the extreme price volatility of these resources, which are vital for public health and well being – and shows just how high energy prices can go.

Even if Massachusetts finds itself spared of the crisis that seemed unavoidable just a few short months ago, we should take the energy price scare as a wake-up call. There is no time like the present to prepare for, and arm all of our citizens against, the inevitable return of higher energy prices in the future.

To this end, the Winter Energy Costs Task Force offers recommendations that focus on:

- Maximizing fuel assistance from federal, state, and private funds to help vulnerable individuals and households make it through the winter, including extending that assistance to more families;
- Dramatically increasing energy efficiency programs to help residents lower their heating bills and reduce the amount of fuels they use; and
- Raising awareness of the resources available to help Massachusetts residents cope with the energy challenge.

Starting in early September, the Winter Energy Costs Task Force held public hearings in Springfield, Fall River, Haverhill, Worcester, and Boston. The Task Force received testimony from state legislators, selectmen, town administrators, community action agency directors, utility executives, non-profit leaders, business leaders, fire chiefs, senior and disability advocates, and concerned citizens. More than 100 people testified at the hearings. Major themes that emerged included:

- the need for more federal funding for fuel assistance in order to avoid a public health crisis for low-income families and seniors;
- the importance of reducing energy costs by making every home and business as energy efficient as possible;
- anxiety about the increased risk of fires due to unsafe heating methods;
- special concern for oil and propane heat customers, who were facing the greatest increase in fuel prices and, unlike natural gas and electric customers, had no winter shut-off protections; and

- the need for public information on heating and fuel assistance to be disseminated to citizens throughout the Commonwealth.

Many of those who testified thanked Governor Patrick and the Legislature for taking action early to raise public awareness and get residents prepared for the winter. Indeed, much has been done already, both prior to and during the Task Force's existence, to anticipate and confront the winter energy challenge:

- With fuel prices skyrocketing this summer, **Governor Patrick launched an aggressive campaign to drastically increase federal funding for fuel assistance**. Working through the New England Governors' Conference and in concert with the Massachusetts Congressional delegation, Governor Patrick personally called leaders in the House, Senate and Bush Administration to convey the urgent need to increase federal heating aid. With his Washington D.C. office closely monitoring developments on Capitol Hill, Governor Patrick traveled to Washington to testify before the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming to reiterate his call for full funding.
- Due in large part to the Governor's advocacy, **Congress approved in September a record 85 percent increase in federal LIHEAP funding**, providing $212 million in fuel assistance for low-income households throughout the Commonwealth.
- Congress also heeded the call from Governor Patrick and the Massachusetts delegation for **more federal weatherization funds**, approving $13 million for Massachusetts – double last year's funding. These weatherization funds will enable 4,000 low-income families to permanently reduce their heating bills by $900 on average and overall energy bills by 25 percent per year.
- The Legislature passed and the Governor approved **$10 million in state funding to supplement federal fuel assistance**, the second year in a row the state has added its own funds to the fuel assistance program.
- The state's Department of Public Utilities (DPU) has ordered utilities to **reduce rates to low-income customers** on their electric and natural gas bills, which will save these customers $75 to $300 over the coming winter.
- The DPU has ordered utilities to expand programs to **help low-income customers pay past due bills** by allowing them to have a portion of an overdue balance forgiven in exchange for making current account payments and paying a portion of the overdue balance each month.
- In line with the goals of the **Green Communities Act,** the comprehensive energy reform legislation signed by Governor Patrick in July, the DPU approved a **$5.9 million expansion of energy efficiency services** for 2008 that will enable utilities to help their customers insulate their homes and upgrade their heating systems through low-interest loans and rebate incentives.
- The state's Department of Energy Resources (DOER) also approved **an increase in the limit on weatherization rebates** and allowed customers to **benefit from both rebates and no-interest loans for energy efficiency upgrades**, rather than choose one or the other.
- The Department of Fire Services has developed a **"Keep Warm, Keep Safe" public education program** to promote fire safety and warn against the unsafe use of alternative heating methods, which is ready to launch in November.
- The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) has been meeting with **local emergency management directors** to coordinate local response and identify local

capacities to address emergency situations related to home heating, and with **Voluntary Agencies Active in Disaster**, a network of social service agencies, churches, and government agencies involved in disaster relief efforts, to talk about ways they can assist in the event of a fuel crisis.

- **Attorney General Martha Coakley** has held a series of forums around the state on energy costs, drawing attention to the coming challenge and seeking to engage stakeholders of all kinds in exploring solutions. The Winter Energy Costs Task Force applauds the Attorney General's initiative, looks forward to her final report, and pledges to work with her office closely as we face the coming winter.

These actions will not only help Massachusetts residents cut their energy consumption and lower their energy bills, but also put them in a stronger position to confront the eventual return of higher fuel prices. We must seize this opportunity to prepare because, when it comes to winter energy costs now and in the future, **we are all in this together**. For this reason, the Winter Energy Costs Task Force intends to reconvene on a quarterly basis to monitor progress in preparing for the coming winter, assess the impact of energy costs on Massachusetts households when winter is upon us, and learn the lessons of winter 2009 to help Massachusetts residents prepare better for winters yet to come.

# Key Findings and Recommendations

## Fuel Assistance

For the most vulnerable among us, subsidies for heating fuel can be a matter of survival. Federal fuel assistance under the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is the key here, and the additional funds obtained through Congressional action are indispensable. But as energy prices have risen over time, it is not just the lowest income population that can be hard hit by heating costs. And as Massachusetts braces for the impact of the economic slowdown, additional families could well find themselves in need this winter.

- We recommend that the Governor **expand eligibility for federal fuel assistance** from $42,400 to $53,600 for a family of four, which would give an additional 55,000 households in Massachusetts help with heating costs this winter.
- We recommend that charities such as the Good Neighbor Energy Fund, which provide fuel assistance to households just above the eligibility limit, prepare for a larger caseload and expand their fundraising capacity, and that **corporate and foundation leaders step up to contribute and raise funds for organizations that help those who cannot pay their heating bills**.

## Energy Efficiency and Conservation

Meeting the need to reduce heating bills will require a focus on making homes tighter, better insulated, and more efficient in their use of fuel. This can be accomplished by both expansion of professionally installed efficiency improvements, principally delivered through utility-administered programs, and "do-it-yourself" efforts.

The Green Communities Act paved the way for a vast expansion of the efficiency resources that can be devoted to meeting our energy needs with less fuel, even as those needs grow. The challenge now is to make good on the promise of the Green Communities Act by revolutionizing our approach to energy efficiency investment, in the process creating new technologies, new delivery systems, and new jobs that help all of us make our energy dollars go farther.

- We recommend that electric and gas utilities follow up their 19 percent expansion of efficiency programs in the fourth quarter of 2008 by developing plans to **double energy efficiency investments for their customers in 2009**. These plans, offered under the trade name of MassSave, will be submitted to and reviewed for cost-effectiveness by the state's Department of Public Utilities (DPU) and paid for in part by the proceeds of Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) emissions allowance auctions.
- We recommend that the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) convene academic, technical, and industry experts to supplement planning by the utilities to **identify new mechanisms for achieving much higher levels of energy efficiency** than provided by traditional programs and measures.
- We recommend that $4 million of the proceeds from the first two RGGI auctions be set aside for **replacement of antiquated heating systems for low-income households**, an efficiency measure that will save energy and stretch fuel assistance dollars further.
- We recommend that the Commonwealth **collect the best information on self-help**

**efficiency measures** and make it available in a variety of formats and through a variety of distribution channels.

- We recommend that **home improvement retailers offer in-store efficiency workshops and consider ways to offer, in partnership with suppliers, free and discounted weatherization materials**, and distribute them through in-store and out-of-store workshops in locations such as church halls and community centers.

## Home Heating Oil and Propane

Over the past two years, home heating oil, which is used by nearly 1 million Massachusetts households, has been the highest cost and most economically volatile heating fuel. It also has other characteristics that make it particularly challenging at times of high prices or economic distress. Unlike electricity and natural gas, heating oil is unregulated by the state, and its users enjoy none of the protections against shut-off during the winter months provided utility customers. The industry of distributors that delivers this fuel is diffuse, including many small businesses, and connection with energy efficiency services provided to customers of electric and natural gas utilities to help them save money is limited. Propane, which is used by a much smaller number of households (primarily in rural and other areas that lack natural gas service), is similar in many ways: prices are high, the industry is diffuse and unregulated, and customers have few protections – indeed, they don't even own their own tanks, which are the property of the propane dealer.

- We recommend that **fuel oil and propane dealers distribute information on energy efficiency,** including eligibility for services provided by their electric utilities, to help their customers make their homes as tight and energy efficient as possible.
- We recommend that the state's heating oil dealers and propane dealers develop and adopt a **"customer's bill of rights"** specific to each industry, including protection for customers who are unable to pay for full tanks of fuel, and that the state **examine whether consumer protection regulations should be developed** for the fuel oil and propane industries.
- We recommend that the state explore with the U.S. Department of Energy enhancement of the **Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve**, clarifying criteria for release, giving consideration to storing a portion of the Reserve in Massachusetts, and increasing capacity, in order to ensure that the Northeast has an adequate supply of home heating oil in the event of an emergency.

## Transportation

Since home heating oil and gasoline both derive from crude oil, their prices tend to rise and fall in tandem, and when heating oil peaked at $4.71 a gallon in July, so too did gasoline, which reached a statewide average of $4.08 for regular. In addition, many households spend as much or more on gasoline as they do on heating fuel. Driving less, maintaining a vehicle well and driving smart are ways of saving gas that are available to all drivers.

- We recommend that the state **encourage increased use of public transportation** such as subways, commuter rail, buses, and ferries, as well as Park-and-Ride facilities, carpools, and vanpools, to help consumers save money on gasoline.
- We recommend that motorists **keep highway speeds at or below 55 to 65 mph** (depending on the speed limit) for a potential gas savings of 10 to 20 percent, and also

minimize idling time, and accelerate and brake more gently to save fuel and money.

## Fire Safety

Heating equipment is the second leading cause of winter home fires, and the leading cause of residential fires in Franklin and Hampshire counties. The spike in energy prices earlier this year triggered increased interest in alternative heating sources such as electric space heaters, as well as wood, coal and pellet stoves. While using these devices can save conventional fuel costs, improper use can pose serious fire hazards, which need to be addressed through a broad-based public education effort. The Department of Fire Services (DFS) is spearheading a public education effort called "Keep Warm, Keep Safe."

DFS has convened a task force that includes other agencies, nonprofits and industry, and has made significant strides in developing the content for this campaign. The public education effort will include television and radio spots, a tool-kit for local fire chiefs, a web effort, press materials, and multi-language print materials. DFS is also developing MBTA transit ads, and pursuing a partnership with big box stores to post safety information at point-of-sale displays. DFS will launch this effort with a campaign rollout in November.

- We recommend that DFS continue to develop public service announcements for use in print, radio, television, and Internet formats – some multi-lingual – with support from utilities and others in the private sector, and work closely with media outlets to ensure **publication and broadcast of the "Keep Warm, Keep Safe" message** in media markets across the Commonwealth.
- We recommend that **fire safety information materials be placed in hardware stores and home improvement centers** throughout the state, especially those that sell space heaters, wood stoves, and other alternative heating equipment.

## Emergency Response

Even with the best support and the best preparation, some individuals and families find themselves unable to afford to heat their homes. The extent of that impact may not yet be known, but if fuel prices once again rise to the levels seen earlier this year, or higher, extraordinary measures may be necessary to help people cope.

- We recommend that **Mass 2-1-1**, a program coordinated by United Way, **become the primary hotline** for energy and heating emergency information.
- We recommend that cities and towns, with the assistance of the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), identify and prepare to use municipal facilities (libraries, senior centers, etc.) as **"warming centers"** where seniors and others who are typically at home can spend the day, allowing them to turn down their thermostats and conserve fuel for evening and nighttime hours.
- We recommend that municipalities, and if need be the state, prepare for a worst-case scenario in which it might be necessary to use **public facilities as overnight shelters** for those who cannot stay in their homes due to lack of heat, with MEMA helping to identify assets and equipment.

## Community Outreach

Community outreach is needed to disseminate information as broadly as possible about emergency and other available assistance (fuel, shelter, low-income benefits) and energy efficiency; and to ensure that neighbors and public authorities know which individuals are most at risk and can reach them if necessary. The low-income population and senior citizens are of particular concern, but efforts should be designed to reach the entire community.

- We recommend that **DHCD coordinate a statewide interagency Winter Energy Costs Outreach Team** to work with key partners (Mass 2-1-1, Community Action Programs (CAP) agencies, utility-sponsored Energy Bucks campaign and others) to disseminate information to low-income households via Mass 2-1-1, direct mail, Web sites, local agency bulletin boards, unemployment offices, and other means.
- We recommend that Elder Affairs **utilize the statewide elder network in providing heating and energy information** via 27 Aging Services Access Points, 349 Councils on Aging and senior centers in communities across the Commonwealth, and advise all seniors that **electric and gas utility service may not be terminated to households in which all residents are 65 years old or older**, regardless of income, without written permission of the DPU, and **that they should identify themselves as such to their utilities**.
- We recommend that the Commonwealth expand its ongoing collaboration with the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) to focus on **timely outreach to local officials on winter energy issues** and to **encourage cities and towns to develop plans for "warming centers"** at councils on aging, libraries, and other municipal locations.

## Publicity, Communications, and Media

Communication of both general and targeted messages through a variety of vehicles can help the Massachusetts public prepare for and cope with volatile heating costs, this winter and beyond.

- We recommend that **a public awareness campaign promoting energy efficiency and disseminating heating emergency information** be launched consisting of high-quality, high-impact advertisements and public service announcements produced by the state's top advertising firms, working in collaboration with state agencies, and broadcast prominently and strategically with the cooperation of television and radio stations across the Commonwealth, in addition to transit and outdoor advertisements, to be paid for with $500,000 of RGGI auction proceeds.
- We recommend that utilities **market the expanded energy efficiency services** available this fall through bill-stuffers and other traditional marketing techniques, as well as their corporate advertising in major media.
- We recommend that **energy efficiency information be displayed on buses and trains** operated by the MBTA and Regional Transit Authorities, on electronic billboards operated by MassHighway and the MassPike, and at Registry of Motor Vehicle offices.
- We recommend that home-improvement centers and hardware stores, which offer **free or low-cost weatherization workshops,** use their Web sites and printed advertising flyers to increase awareness of and participation in these instructional programs.

# Detailed Findings and Recommendations

## Fuel Assistance

Federal fuel assistance is a lifeline for low-income households facing high heating bills. The state's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) administers the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), which provides a subsidy to pay utility and fuel oil heating bills for low-income homeowners and tenants, with eligibility currently limited to those with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level ($42,400 for a family of four).

Last winter, Massachusetts received $115 million in federal LIHEAP funds. Governor Patrick and the Legislature supplemented LIHEAP with an additional $15 million in state funds to provide an average benefit of $738 to 141,000 households. With the average price of home heating oil at $3.24 per gallon, this benefit provided approximately seven weeks of heat for an oil-heated household.

With fuel prices skyrocketing this summer, Governor Patrick launched an aggressive campaign to drastically increase federal funding for fuel assistance. In July, Governor Patrick led his fellow New England governors in calling on the Congressional leadership to increase LIHEAP funding in order to prevent a public health crisis in New England this winter. In August, Governor Patrick personally called House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, and U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt to convey the urgency of increasing fuel assistance to Massachusetts. In September, Governor Patrick again joined the New England Governors in passing a resolution urging Congress to fully fund LIHEAP. And on September 25, Governor Patrick traveled to Washington, D.C., to testify before the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, reiterating his call for full funding of federal fuel assistance for the coming winter.

As September drew to a close, Congress, with strong leadership from the Massachusetts Congressional delegation, approved an historic 85 percent increase in federal LIHEAP funding. The $212 million provided for Massachusetts, combined with $11.5 million in unspent FY08 funds released by the President in September and $10 million in state funds appropriated by the Legislature and approved by the Governor, will bring total fuel assistance funding to $233.5 million for the upcoming heating season. This level of funding will increase the average benefit to $1,022 – enough to provide 10 weeks of heat for oil-heated households.

During this time of deteriorating economic conditions, it is expected that thousands of family just above the current eligibility guidelines will be in need. Providing a modest subsidy for families making up to 60 percent of state median income ($53,600 for a family of four) to purchase a month's worth of fuel could make a tremendous difference.

But this slight expansion of eligibility would do nothing to help the thousands of working families and seniors just above this income level who may also need help heating their homes this winter. Massachusetts has a strong network of charities, non-profits, and community action agencies that provide fuel assistance to people in need. These include the Salvation Army's Good Neighbor Energy Fund, which assists Massachusetts residents in need of fuel assistance just above LIHEAP eligibility levels and last year provided $933,000 to 2,977 house-

holds; United Way's Special Fund for Emergency Financial Assistance, which meets immediate financial emergencies of low-income individuals and families – including fuel, food, mortgage, medical, and transportation assistance – and awarded $613,000 to 15 agencies providing assistance to 4,971 people during fiscal 2008; Catholic Charities Basic Needs Emergency Services, which helps people in need of food, fuel, rental, and utility assistance; and Citizens Energy's heat assistance programs for low-income people who cannot afford to pay their oil and natural gas heating bills.

- We recommend that the Governor **expand eligibility for fuel assistance** (LIHEAP) from $42,400 to $53,600 for a family of four, which would help an additional 55,000 families in Massachusetts obtain fuel assistance this winter. These households would receive a benefit of $445, enough for one month's worth of heat for oil-heated customers.
- We recommend that **charities and other organizations that provide fuel assistance make every effort to expand their fundraising capacity and prepare for a larger caseload**, recognizing that, due to economic uncertainty and volatile energy prices, many working and middle class families may need help this winter – some for the first time.
- We recommend that **business leaders and foundations lead a campaign to raise funds** for charities throughout Massachusetts to address the coming social service needs this winter, including fuel and food assistance.
- We recommend that **major oil companies that supply home heating oil to Massachusetts dealers expand donations** to charities and other organizations providing fuel assistance across the Commonwealth.

## Energy Efficiency and Conservation

There is tremendous potential for reducing energy costs, including heating fuel costs, through improving the energy efficiency of buildings and heating systems and through conservation measures. Massachusetts has been a leader in the efficiency field historically, and under the Green Communities Act these programs will expand greatly in the future.

However, as of now only a fraction of the state's homes, both owner-occupied and rental units, has been reached by these programs, especially in relation to winter space heating. Meeting this winter's critical need to reduce heating bills will require a focus on making homes tighter, better insulated, and more efficient in their use of fuel. This can be accomplished by both expansion of professionally installed efficiency improvements, principally delivered through utility-administered programs, and "do-it-yourself" efforts by homeowners, renters, and community volunteers helping vulnerable neighbors protect themselves against winter energy costs.

**Expanded utility-administered energy efficiency programs for residential customers will save energy and money.** The principal vehicles for promoting energy efficiency upgrades are the programs administered by the electric and natural gas companies, currently supported by the efficiency charge on utility bills. These residential conservation programs – collectively known by the trade name MassSave – offer no-cost energy audits and rebates and other incentives, including low- and no-interest loans, to encourage customers to make investments identified by these audits, such as insulation and heating and water-heating upgrades, as well as lighting improvements such as compact fluorescent lights in place of incandescent bulbs, in order to reduce energy use and cost. Traditionally, demand for these services tapers off in the summer, but with the cost of home heating fuel on the rise, interest in these programs remained keen throughout the summer, indicating a need to help citizens protect themselves

from rising costs through energy efficiency advice and financial support.

In response to record high fuel oil prices and reports of a growing list of residential customers waiting for home energy audits, the DOER Commissioner asked the DPU to order the state's electric and natural gas utilities to increase their spending on residential energy efficiency measures this fall. On October 1, the DPU approved $5.9 million in additional spending on energy efficiency by the utilities, which will be paid for by the proceeds of the first two Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) emissions allowance auctions, in order to help Massachusetts households make money-saving improvements in their homes. In addition, DOER has approved a number of enhancements to energy efficiency programs proposed by the utilities. It is vital that all these resources be put to work to help Massachusetts households prepare for the coming winter.

But the Green Communities Act paved the way for a much greater expansion of the efficiency resources that can be devoted to meeting our energy needs with less fuel, even as those needs grow. The challenge now is to make good on the promise of the Green Communities Act by revolutionizing our approach to energy efficiency investment, in the process creating new technologies, new delivery systems, and new jobs that help all of us make our energy dollars go farther.

- We recommend that electric and gas utilities follow up their 19 percent expansion of efficiency programs in the fourth quarter of 2008 by developing plans to **double energy efficiency investments for their customers in 2009**. These plans, offered under the trade name of MassSave, must be submitted to and reviewed for cost-effectiveness by the state's Department of Public Utilities (DPU) and paid for in part by the proceeds of RGGI emissions allowance auctions.
- We recommend that the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) convene academic, technical, and industry experts to supplement planning by the utilities to **identify new mechanisms for achieving much higher levels of energy efficiency** than provided by traditional programs and measures.
- We recommend that utility efficiency programs make the most of the additional incentive provided by the approved **increase in the rebate limit for weatherization measures** from the current 50 percent of project cost up to a limit of $1,500 to 75 percent of project cost up to a limit of $2,000 to help households make their homes cheaper to heat.
- We recommend that utilities make their customers aware that they can now qualify for **both rebates and a no-interest HEAT loan** for heating system replacement, rather than having to choose one or the other.
- We recommend that utilities take full advantage of the fact that **home energy audits will no longer be required** before customers receive rebates for heating system replacement (although customers will still be encouraged to receive a free audit) to help their customers upgrade their heating equipment to more efficient models before the winter heating season begins.

**Replacing old inefficient boilers and furnaces can save homeowners up to 30 percent in energy costs, or more than $1,000 per year for the average home, and making fuel assistance go further for low-income households.** The state administers the Heating Emergency Assistance Retrofit Task Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP), a federal program that improves energy efficiency in low-income households through furnace and boiler tune-ups, heating system repair, and replacement of old, inefficient systems. Currently, this $8.5 million program serves 8,000 low-income homes each year. Short of replacement, a professional fur-

nace or boiler tune-up can reduce the risk of fire, decrease the chance of malfunction, and increase efficiency by five to 10 percent, saving a homeowner between $170 and $340 annually.

- We recommend that $4 million of the proceeds from the first two RGGI auctions be set aside for **replacement of antiquated heating systems for low-income households**, an efficiency measure that will save energy and stretch fuel assistance dollars further.

**"Do-it-yourself" home energy efficiency measures can also help.** Despite the best efforts of the utilities, their contractors, and state agencies, there are limits to the degree to which the utility-administered programs can be expanded in time to be of help during this coming winter.

| **Air Sealing & Insulation** | **Cost** | **% Saved** |
|---|---|---|
| Air Sealing | $200—$500 | 6—16% |
| Attic Insulation (starting from nothing) | $200—$1,000 | 15—17% |
| Increase attic insulation | $200—$1,000 | 2—3% |
| Exterior wall insulation | $1,500—$3,000 | 16—18% |
| Dual-pane windows<br>(no storm windows before)<br>(storm windows before) | $3,000—<br>$10,000 | 10—13%<br>8% |
| Basement insulation | $500—$1,000 | 3—7% |
| **Reduce Temperature** | | |
| Reduce temperature, part of day, using programmable thermostat (2—8 degrees for 8—16 hours per day) | $30—$40 | 2—12% |
| Lower thermostat setting all the time, 2 to 6 degrees | $0 | 5—15% |
| **Heating System, Pipes, Ducts** | | |
| Replace heating system | $5,000—$8,000 | 6—30% |
| Insulate heating ducts (hot air system) | $100—$300 | 7—20% |
| Insulate heating pipes | $50—$100 | 4% |

**Notes:**
1. Every house is different – expected costs and savings are a broad range, depending on conditions in your house.
2. The percent savings from individual steps cannot be added together – doing one step reduces the gains from doing the next one.

In addition, there are many measures homeowners, tenants, and landlords can implement on their own to reduce energy usage and heating cost. In the face of high energy costs this winter, it makes sense to promote "do-it-yourself" energy efficiency and conservation to a much greater degree today than in the past. Weatherizing windows and doors with caulking and weather-stripping is the place to start, but even more extensive work, such as air sealing and insulation in attics and basements, can be practical even for those with limited home-improvement skills, with proper instruction. The state should encourage such efforts, in cooperation with municipal governments, other agencies, community groups, and religious institutions.

- We recommend that the Commonwealth **collect the best information on self-help efficiency measures** available from our own and other sources (such as the federal EPA

and DOE, and other states) and develop new material as needed to provide the best advice on self-help weatherization. Topics to be covered should include:

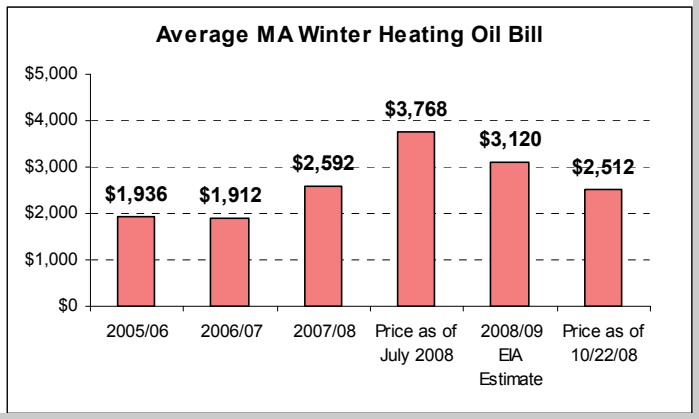
- ◊ overview of home energy efficiency and conservation
- ◊ weatherizing windows and doors
- ◊ air sealing attics and basements
- ◊ insulating attics, basements, and heat/hot water pipes and ducts
- ◊ maintaining heating systems
- ◊ installing and using programmable thermostats
- ◊ buying new windows
- ◊ moveable window insulation – such as roll-up insulated shades and do-it-yourself insulating boards
- ◊ water heaters and hot water conservation
- ◊ EnergyStar appliances, compact fluorescent (CFL) bulbs and fixtures to save electricity
- ◊ energy conservation tips, such as turning the thermostat down when possible, turning off lights and electronics when they are not in use
- ◊ a checklist to help people obtain quality work when they hire their own contractors

- We recommend that **information on do-it-yourself weatherization measures be compiled in a variety of formats** and levels of detail – for example, introductory pamphlets on rudimentary weatherization projects for those with little knowledge; more advanced installation guides on air sealing and insulation methods for those with greater home repair and construction skills – and to the extent possible in all the major languages spoken in the Commonwealth.
- While materials in written form are easiest to produce, we also recommend that **materials be developed in other forms**, such as videos that can be watched on television, computer, or DVD player.
- We recommend that **this information be distributed through a variety of channels**, including:
  - ◊ MassSave.com, the joint Web site of the utility-run residential efficiency programs.
  - ◊ the Web sites of each of the electric and natural gas utilities, which already provide efficiency information to varying degrees as well as online energy audit tools.
  - ◊ Mass.gov, on a dedicated Web page linked prominently from the home page, as well as the home pages of agencies including DOER, Department of Housing and Community Development, Executive Office of Elder Affairs, Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works, Mass. Bay Transportation Authority, and the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. All state agencies should make a particular effort to ensure that their own employees are made aware of energy saving opportunities through internal Web sites, e-mail messages, fliers distributed in employee mailboxes, and bulletin board postings.
  - ◊ city and town municipal Web sites.
  - ◊ cable community access television channels.
- We recommend that **home improvement retailers consider ways to offer free and discounted weatherization materials,** in partnership with suppliers. Many do-it-yourself measures involve relatively inexpensive materials, such as fiberglass, caulking, and plastic film. But for many low-income households even these costs may be difficult to cover, and

at present the utility-based rebate programs cover only professional installations, not purchase of do-it-yourself materials. One possibility might be to offer discounted materials as an enticement for attending in-store efficiency workshops, or through sponsorship of out-of-store workshops in locations such as church halls and community centers. Foundations might also assist with funding for discounts.

## Home Heating Oil and Propane

More than 963,000 homes in Massachusetts – approximately 40 percent – heat with oil, with most homes using between 800 and 1,100 gallons each season, according to the Massachusetts Oilheat Council. Over 800 distributors, many of them small businesses, deliver approximately 2 billion gallons of home heating oil annually, making Massachusetts the third largest heating oil state in terms of volume, after New York and Pennsylvania.




With the average price of home heating oil currently $3.14 a gallon, the cost of heating an average Massachusetts household this winter will exceed $2,500 – roughly the same as last winter, but up from $1,900 just two winters ago. If the price returns to $4.71, where it stood earlier this year, the cost would rise to $3,800 – a staggering expense for many Massachusetts families and senior citizens.

Unlike homes heated by natural gas or by electricity distributed by state-regulated utilities, oil heat customers are not shielded by winter shut-off protections. If a customer is unable to pay, and a home heating oil dealer is unable to extend additional credit, that customer will be in jeopardy. For families that cannot obtain heating oil, the most immediate and serious risk is hypothermia, particularly for children, people with disabilities, and seniors. Additionally, there is the risk of pipes freezing and bursting, creating costly home damage.

**It is imperative that every effort be made to ensure that home heating oil customers do not go without heat.** Making sure that no one runs out of oil before the cold weather abates will hinge in part on a partnership between the state and Massachusetts fuel oil dealers.

- We recommend that **fuel oil dealers distribute information on energy efficiency,** including eligibility for services provided by their electric utilities, to help their customers make their homes as tight and energy efficient as possible.
- We recommend that **fuel oil dealers encourage oil heat customers to adopt a 12-month billing plan.**
- We recommend that **fuel oil dealers provide every oil heat customer with information on how to reduce the risk of fires in the home**, including the maintenance of furnaces and boilers, risks associated with alternative heating devices (see Fire Safety section of this report), and the need for smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, as required by law.
- We recommend that **fuel oil dealers commit to deliver fuel to every customer in their service territory who is able to pay cash** for the requested delivery, even those custom-

ers who owe money for prior delivery and who are requesting less than a full tank of fuel.

- We recommend that **fuel oil dealers reduce delivery surcharges** for customers without the means to purchase a full tank of oil.
- We recommend that **fuel oil dealers provide contact information for organizations that provide emergency fuel assistance** to any residential customer to whom fuel can no longer be delivered.
- We recommend that the state's heating oil dealers develop and adopt a **"heating oil customer's bill of rights,"** including protection for customers who are unable to pay for a full tank of oil, and that the state **examine whether consumer protection regulations should be developed** for the Massachusetts fuel oil industry.

**Though they number only 68,500, Massachusetts households that heat their homes with propane face many of the same challenges as oil heat customers.** As with oil, the propane (or liquefied petroleum gas) industry is unregulated, and propane prices, which have been high, have only begun to come down. In addition, propane customers do not own their home's propane tank; instead, propane companies own the tanks, and no company will make a propane delivery to a tank owned by another vendor. This prevents customers from shopping around when they need a delivery, as oil customers can do. Even worse, when customers fall behind in payments, their dealers can lock the tank so no more fuel can be drawn out until the customers catch up on payments. That leaves low-income propane customers particularly vulnerable during the winter heating season. Several years ago, the state of Vermont enacted propane regulations that mirror the shut-off protections provided customers of utility companies in Massachusetts.

- We recommend that **propane dealers distribute information on energy efficiency,** including eligibility for services provided by their electric utilities, to help their customers make their homes as tight and energy efficient as possible.
- We recommend that the state's propane dealers also develop a **"customer's bill of rights,"** including protection for customers who are unable to pay for a full tank of propane, and that the state examine **whether consumer protection regulations should be developed** for the Massachusetts propane industry.

**The Northeast Home Heating Oil Reserve, created by President Clinton in July 2000, was designed to provide a buffer against interruptions in oil supply or severe winter weather for the approximately 5.3 million households in the Northeast that heat with oil.** The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) maintains the Reserve at storage facilities in New York Harbor (1 million barrels); New Haven, Connecticut (750,000 barrels); and Groton, Connecticut (250,000 barrels). Whether to release all or part of the Reserve is up to the President, who has the authority to make the requisite finding of a "severe energy supply interruption."

- We recommend that the Commissioner of DOER urge the U.S. DOE to convene representatives of northeastern states this fall to **clarify criteria for "a regional supply shortage"** that could trigger release of the Reserve. Criteria could include factors such as inventories, transportation and distribution problems, and extreme weather.
- We recommend that DOER explore with the Massachusetts Oilheat Council, Massachusetts Petroleum Council, heating oil terminal owners, and other regional stakeholders the barriers to and opportunities for a portion of the Reserve to be stored in Massachusetts, which would **provide better access to the Reserve for northern states** in the event of an emergency.
- We recommend that, given that 5.3 million homes in the Northeast rely on home heating oil

and that the Reserve currently contains supplies sufficient for only three days of typical winter usage, the DOE reexamine the Reserve's supply level and, if necessary, implement a plan to **expand capacity to ensure that the Northeast has an adequate supply of home heating oil** in the event of an emergency.

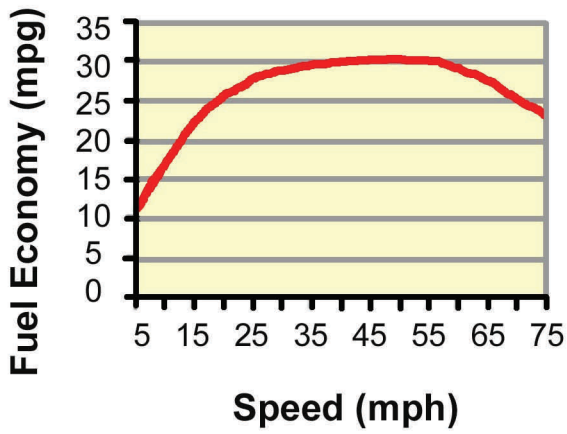
## Transportation

While the focus of this Task Force report is on energy costs that occur primarily during the winter, reducing other fuel costs will yield a benefit to household budgets straining to pay home heating bills. Since home heating oil and gasoline both derive from crude oil, their prices tend to rise and fall in tandem. Anytime that heating oil is expensive, gasoline will be also – and many households spend as much or more on gasoline as they do on heating fuel.

Consumers can reduce their transportation costs by driving less, using more fuel-efficient vehicles, maintaining their vehicles well, and driving "smart" in ways that minimize the amount of fuel their vehicles use. Cars get their best mileage on the highway at around 55 miles per hour, and gas usage increases sharply at higher speeds. The office supply company Staples reports that it is saving between 20 and 30 percent of fuel used in its entire fleet of delivery trucks by physically preventing them from driving faster than 59 miles per hour, and changing gear mechanisms so that trucks shift into higher gears at lower speeds.

Driving a more fuel-efficient vehicle can be a large gasoline saver, but that is an option only for those who are in a position to replace their existing car with a more efficient vehicle. For those who can afford to buy a more efficient vehicle, miles per gallon ratings will be of interest. These can be found at: www.fueleconomy.gov, for both current models and older vehicles. For all other drivers, it is important to understand ways to minimize transportation fuel costs.

**Driving less, maintaining a vehicle well and driving smart are ways of saving gas that are available to all drivers.** Since there is little public awareness about the value of these factors, there is substantial potential for changing behavior – and thereby saving fuel and money – through public education.




- We recommend that the state **encourage increased use of public transportation** such as subways, commuter rail, buses, and ferries, as well as Park-and-Ride facilities, carpools, and vanpools.
- We recommend that, whenever possible, residents **consider bicycling and walking** instead of driving.
- We recommend that **public agencies, private businesses, and other groups make more use of videoconferencing and teleconferences**, in lieu of in-person meetings that require transportation.
- We recommend that motorists **keep highway speeds at or below 55 to 65 mph** (depending on the speed limit) for a potential gas savings of 10 to 20 percent, and also minimize idling time, and accelerate and brake more gently to save fuel and money.

- We recommend that motorists **get tune-ups and oil changes** and replace air filters at manufacturer-recommended intervals, and keep tires inflated at the correct air pressure.

**State and regional transportation agencies can help disseminate information to the public about ways to cope with energy costs.** Agencies such as the Executive Office of Transportation, the MBTA, and regional transportation authorities are particularly well suited to provide information to the public.

- We recommend that transportation agencies, such as the Mass Highway Department and the Massachusetts Turnpike, **post information about the Mass 2-1-1 Hotline** (see Emergency Response) on their Web sites, as well as public service announcements in MBTA cars, and on electronic billboards on major highways.
- We recommend that transportation agencies use the same outlets to **increase publicity about the importance of energy efficiency and conservation**, including the availability of utility efficiency programs and do-it-yourself measures.
- We recommend that information about **driving tips that result in fuel and cost savings be included in scheduled mailings** from the Registry of Motor Vehicles to customers throughout the Commonwealth, and be posted online at transportation agencies' Web sites.

## Fire Safety

High energy prices will likely trigger increased use of alternative heating sources such as electric space heaters, as well as wood, coal and pellet stoves. While using these devices can save conventional fuel costs, improper use can pose serious fire hazards, which need to be addressed through a broad-based public education effort.

According to the Massachusetts Fire Incident Reporting System, heating equipment is the second leading cause of winter home fires, and the leading cause of residential fires in Franklin and Hampshire counties. In 2007, there were 3,006 heating fires in Massachusetts, which resulted in four civilian deaths, 26 civilian injuries, 35 fire service injuries and over $26.5 million in property losses. Space heater fires are less frequent but often deadly. The Department of Fire Services (DFS) reports that, during the last five years, one of every 10 space heater fires resulted in a fatality. In 2007 alone, 19 fires caused three civilian deaths, two civilian injuries and seven fire service injuries. Approximately a third of these fires occurred because combustible materials such as bedding, newspapers, or furniture were too close to the heater.

**While information regarding safe, legal use of alternative heating equipment exists on the DFS Web site (and through links on the DOER Web site), a more robust and direct public education campaign is necessary given increasing interest in these alternative heating sources.** Such a campaign should include delivery of messages through the mass media, as well as through specialized, community channels in multiple languages. DFS has created a campaign titled "Keep Warm, Keep Safe" to address these issues. Vigorous implementation of this multi-media public service campaign is crucial to ensuring that all Massachusetts households have the information they need to make informed choices about safe heating this winter.

- We recommend that DFS continue to **develop public service announcements with the "Keep Warm, Keep Safe" message** for use in print, radio, television, and Internet formats, with some materials in a multi-lingual format. DFS has obtained support from utilities and

others in the private sector to assist in this campaign, which is expected to launch in November.

- We recommend that DFS continue to work closely with media outlets to ensure publication and broadcast of the "Keep Warm, Keep Safe" message in media markets across the Commonwealth. DFS is in the process of **developing a long-term media strategy that includes the public service announcement campaign, localized press releases for use by municipal fire departments, editorial board meetings, and op-ed pieces.**
- We recommend that **fire safety information materials be placed in hardware stores and home improvement centers** throughout the state, especially those that sell space heaters, wood stoves, and other alternative heating equipment. DFS has scheduled a meeting with representatives of "big box" stores to discuss placement of fire safety materials and the public service campaign.

**In addition to the multi-media public education campaign, protection of public safety hinges on a grassroots effort involving a variety of government agencies and community groups in order to reach the broadest possible range of audiences – especially those particularly at risk for winter heating fires, such as senior citizens and households on fixed incomes.** DFS is forming a group of government and non-government organizations to help disseminate fire safety materials to at-risk populations. Members of this group currently include: the Executive Offices of Public Safety and Security, Elder Affairs, and Health and Human Services; the Departments of Housing and Community Development and Public Health; the Office of the Attorney General; the Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts; and the Fire Prevention Association of Massachusetts, among others.

- We recommend that this ad hoc group of agencies and organizations continue expanding its membership and meeting to **brainstorm strategies for distributing winter heating fire safety information** to diverse audiences across the Commonwealth.
- We recommend that **educational materials be distributed at outreach events** throughout the state, such as Senior Benefits Expos, the Massachusetts Fire Safety Public Education Conference, the Massachusetts Association for Community Action, the LIHEAP Training Conference, and the Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging and Senior Center Directors. In addition to distributing winter fire safety materials at all Massachusetts Senior Benefits Expos and the Massachusetts Fire Safety Public Education Conference, the State Fire Marshal has spoken and will continue to speak on fire safety at a wide range of events.
- We recommend that **local fire departments be involved in placing and distributing fire safety educational materials** in their communities, including locations such as malls and other shopping areas. DFS is developing an Instructors Packet to assist local fire departments in outreach in their communities.
- We recommend that DFS **offer numerous training sessions on alternative heating sources** for local fire, building, and public health officials throughout the state this fall, to ensure that they are fluent in all state regulations and laws relating to proper inspections and operation of heating systems, as well as the state fire code. In coordination with the Department of Public Safety, DFS has already held several training sessions on alternative fueling sources, with several more planned.
- We recommend that local **Student Awareness of Fire Education (SAFE) officers conduct school-based programs about safe heating** throughout the Commonwealth. SAFE is a state initiative that provides resources to local fire departments to conduct fire and life safety education programs in grades K-12.

## Emergency Response

### *Statewide Hotline*

A number of telephone and Web-based information lines currently exist to help Massachusetts residents navigate a complex network of governmental, nonprofit and utility-run energy programs. Among these is Mass 2-1-1, a program coordinated by United Way and modeled on a national 2-1-1 program established by the Federal Communications Commission. It is a 24-hour, seven-day per week call center for phone inquiries – and a Web site – created by the Council of Massachusetts United Ways on behalf of 22 local United Ways serving every community of the Commonwealth. Mass 2-1-1 works in partnership with and receives support from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), as well as from United Way itself.

During emergencies, Mass 2-1-1 offers access to vital updated disaster information, numerous post-disaster programs, interpreter services, and tracking of caller locations. Mass 2-1-1 can also act as the registration site for spontaneous volunteers and donations from the public during an emergency or crisis.

A number of other referral services provide assistance to targeted populations throughout the state. These include the **Cold Relief Heatline (1-800-632-8175)** managed by DHCD in conjunction with other organizations, which is staffed during work hours, and has a 24-hour automated voice response system (in English and Spanish) that provides callers with local fuel assistance contact information based on their five-digit zip code; **Elder Affairs' 1- 800-AGE-INFO** telephone referral line and **www.800AGEINFO.com** Web site, which operate 24 hours per day and are designed to help consumers, caregivers and others seeking information and resources on elder care services, including energy and utility information; and the **DPU Consumer Division (1-800-392-6066),** which assists consumers with utility-related billing, arrearage programs, payment plans and rate information.

**A one-stop, 24-hour information line that can match citizens with the most appropriate energy-related services for their needs will enhance the Commonwealth's efforts to address ongoing and emergency needs during the winter heating season.** The Mass 2-1-1 program offers a way to access a broad spectrum of health and human services information and referrals with a single phone call.

- We recommend that the **Mass 2-1-1 program be designated as the state's hotline for winter energy information**, and that the energy-related resources of the call center and Web site be updated frequently.
- We recommend that the state **support Mass 2-1-1's efforts to develop energy-targeted emergency plans** and information and energy efficiency-related information.

### *Warming Centers and Shelters*

A crisis related to winter energy costs would be different from other crises that have faced the Commonwealth. Unlike other emergencies that occur quickly, a heating emergency would take place gradually, but could have equally serious effects – such as illness or even death due to lack of heat, increased risk of fire resulting from unsafe heating methods, and increased homelessness due to lack of heat or damage to frozen pipes.

- We recommend that, as a critical first step, **municipalities, with the assistance of**

**MEMA, review and update their local emergency plans** to include a proactive strategy for addressing a heating-related emergency of prolonged duration.

- We recommend that communities **begin preparation now** for the winter months ahead. Municipalities should inventory possible warming center options immediately, so that residents can begin to utilize such centers as soon as the temperature drops, enabling them to stretch their energy dollars into the coldest months of the winter.

### *Warming Centers*

**An important strategy for consumers to conserve limited funds for heating, especially those such as seniors, who are typically at home most of the time, would be to keep their heat at a minimum level during the day and turn it up only at night.** This approach would require that municipalities identify locations that can be used during the day by individuals trying to conserve heat. Possible options include: libraries, town halls or other municipal office space, housing authority space, senior centers, and Councils on Aging. Many of these locations would normally be open during the day and could accommodate additional individuals with limited extra cost. However, spaces like schools, which typically would be available in an emergency of short duration, will be in operation and therefore unavailable for these purposes.

We recommend that cities and towns **develop plans for providing warming centers**, so that seniors and others who are normally at home during the day can turn down their heat in order to conserve fuel and reduce heating costs.

### *Shelters*

**In the most extreme situation, residents who are completely without heat may need emergency shelter. Should this occur, MEMA can serve as a critical resource to municipalities.** MEMA is reaching out to local emergency management directors to ensure they are working with the other municipal departments in their cities and towns to coordinate local response and identify local capacities to address emergency situations related to the home heating situation. MEMA can also help cities and towns to identify the assets and equipment that are needed, and then work to locate and coordinate the delivery of that equipment or service.

- We recommend that MEMA continue its work with its municipal partners to **assess local capacity for emergency sheltering**, in order to minimize the disruption of daily routines and reduce transportation costs associated with relocation to centralized shelters.
- We recommend that, should the crisis overwhelm local capabilities, the **state evaluate the possibility of utilizing state facilities** to assist in addressing sheltering needs.

## Community Outreach

Community outreach is needed to disseminate information as broadly as possible about emergency and other available assistance (fuel, shelter, low-income benefits) and energy efficiency; and to ensure that neighbors and public authorities know which individuals are most at risk and can reach them if necessary. The low-income population and senior citizens are of particular concern, but efforts should be designed to reach the entire community.

### *Assistance to Low-Income Households*

**It is critical to identify and implement effective ways to contact and offer assistance to the most vulnerable, low-income populations who are potentially eligible for government fuel, weatherization, and financial assistance.** This includes ensuring that low-income ratepayers understand and take advantage of utility ratepayer protections as most recently enhanced by the DPU, including discounted rates, protections from shut-offs, and arrearage management programs (including some arrearage forgiveness).

- We recommend that DHCD, which runs fuel assistance and weatherization programs for low-income households, **coordinate a statewide interagency Winter Energy Costs Outreach Team** to work with key partners (Mass 2-1-1, CAP agencies, utility-sponsored Energy Bucks campaign and others) to disseminate information to low-income households via Mass 2-1-1, direct mail, Web sites, local agency bulletin boards, unemployment offices, etc. Information should include: fuel assistance through LIHEAP and other resources that provides eligible households with financial help in paying a portion of winter heating bills; weatherization programs available to low-income households; utility-run energy efficiency services, low-income discount rates, shut-off protections, budget billing, and payment plans for arrearage management; "do-it-yourself" energy saving steps that households can take at no cost and at low to moderate cost; local availability of "warm rooms" and emergency shelters; and legal advocacy regarding utility shut-offs and problems with heating oil deliveries and payments.

### *Targeted Outreach to Senior Citizens*

**Programs that are designed for seniors, and senior centers, are critical elements of protecting the state's population from winter heating emergencies.** Senior citizens are particularly vulnerable to running out of fuel, since they tend to spend most of their time at home and their health is severely at risk should temperatures drop greatly due to lack of heat. This fall, the Executive Office of Elder Affairs organized eight Senior Benefits Expos throughout the state, aimed at seniors, people with disabilities, and caregivers. These events cover a range of services and include resource information and advice on fuel and utilities. Multiple state agencies collaborated to produce a flyer that summarizes energy-saving tips and the utility and fuel assistance programs.

- We recommend that Elder Affairs **continue to utilize the statewide elder network in providing services** and communicating new or changed initiatives locally via 27 Aging Services Access Points, 349 Councils on Aging and senior centers in communities across the Commonwealth. This network reaches out to elders in need of a range of services.
- We recommend that all participants in the statewide elder network **advise seniors that electric and gas utility service may not be terminated to households in which all residents are 65 years old or older**, regardless of income, without written permission of the DPU, and that seniors should identify themselves as such to their utilities. (Note that this protection does not apply to fuel oil delivery, which the DPU does not have the authority to regulate.)
- We recommend that the DPU, in the course of rulemaking to increase termination protections for low-income customers, **provide a simpler, shorter process for low-income customers with a serious illness to obtain utility cut-off protection.** The DPU should allow for medical practitioners such as nurses and physicians' assistants to certify to a serious illness. Currently, only a physician or a local board of health may provide the certification. And the DPU should promulgate regulations to allow customers with a chronic

illness to provide re-certification of the illness once or twice annually, rather than every three months.

### *Outreach to Cities and Towns, Civic Groups, Religious Organizations*

**Many cities and towns concerned about energy costs for the coming winter have already begun looking at options for assisting their residents, businesses, and agencies.**

- We recommend that the Commonwealth expand its ongoing collaboration with the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) in support of local governments, to focus on **timely outreach to local officials on winter energy issues.** The Commonwealth should provide sample press releases, publications and Web resources on energy topics through the MMA and ongoing communications with cities and towns, in formats that can be easily adapted for use on municipal Web sites and in local publications.
- We recommend that cities and towns, in collaboration with the Commonwealth, engage local religious organizations, Chambers of Commerce, and service organizations such as the Rotary and Elks clubs to **develop "neighbor-to-neighbor" and other local approaches** to the winter energy crisis.
- We recommend that cities and towns **distribute written materials and videos on energy efficiency** to public libraries, and that the libraries publicize the availability of such materials and make them easily accessible to the public.
- We recommend that cities and towns **develop plans for providing "warming centers"** at councils on aging, libraries, and other municipal locations so that seniors and others who are normally at home during the day can turn down their heat to conserve fuel and reduce heating costs, and that municipalities develop plans for communicating information on emergency assistance.
- We recommend that cities and towns **organize and widely publicize local energy efficiency training sessions** at public buildings.

### *Energy Efficiency Outreach - Workshops/Training Sessions/Training for Trainers*

**While there is a great deal of value in the development and dissemination of "do-it-yourself" energy efficiency materials, many people are naturally afraid to try things they haven't done before.** This fear barrier may be easier to overcome with hands-on training. Several major retail vendors already provide brief workshops on home energy efficiency measures. Home Depot has committed to running them twice a week at every store in New England for at least the next few months. Such in-store sessions tend to be relatively brief, however, and the large home improvement stores tend not to be located in some of the neighborhoods with the greatest need for reducing energy costs. Thus, there is also a need for training sessions that are longer, more in-depth, and that take place within the communities that need them.

- We recommend that local institutions (cities and towns, adult education programs, community and civic groups, religious institutions) make efforts to **arrange efficiency training sessions**.
- We recommend that the utilities and the state develop and make available curriculum materials for use in such training sessions, and that **the utilities and the community action agencies that administer low-income efficiency programs assist by providing trainers and speakers** for such training sessions.

- We recommend that **retail vendors and local institutions hold "training for trainers,"** at which attendees will be people who already have some home repair skills, and who would agree to assist neighbors, friends, and relatives in their communities who do not have the skills to install certain measures themselves (such as air sealing, insulation, and installation of programmable thermostats). Implementation of do-it-yourself efficiency will depend significantly on the degree to which volunteers can be mobilized to help their neighbors with the installations.

### *Emergency Management*

**The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) assists residents, businesses, and communities in preparing for and responding to emergencies and disasters, and coordinates federal, state, local, voluntary, and private resources.** MEMA also provides leadership to communities in developing emergency preparedness plans. In September, MEMA hosted a meeting of the Emergency Management Directors Advisory Council (40 Emergency Management Directors from across the Commonwealth) to discuss preliminary guidance for developing community-based plans related to winter heating issues.

- We recommend that MEMA continue to take a lead role in developing and disseminating guidance for local governments and local civic leaders to **review and augment their local emergency preparedness plans with a winter home heating plan** that addresses the possibility of an extended winter energy crisis.

## Publicity, Communications, and Media

Communication of both general and targeted messages through a variety of vehicles can help the Massachusetts public prepare for and cope with volatile heating costs, this winter and beyond.

### *Marketing Efficiency Programs to Maximize Participation*

Massachusetts has long had one of the largest and most successful energy efficiency programs in the country, managed by electric and natural gas utilities for all customers and, for low-income customers, operated in collaboration with Community Action Programs through the Low-Income Energy Affordability Network (LEAN). But with limited dollars available, both general and low-income weatherization programs have managed demand for energy- and money-saving services in a context of scarcity. To make the most of additional energy efficiency dollars made available through expanded utility programs this year and next, federal weatherization funds, and RGGI auction proceeds in order to serve as many households as possible, more proactive marketing of energy efficiency services would be in order.

- We recommend that **a public awareness campaign promoting energy efficiency and disseminating heating emergency information** be launched consisting of high-quality, high-impact advertisements and public service announcements produced by the state's top advertising firms, working in collaboration with state agencies, and broadcast prominently and strategically with the cooperation of television and radio stations across the Commonwealth, in addition to transit and outdoor advertisements, to be paid for with $500,000 of RGGI auction proceeds.
- We recommend that **bill-stuffers and other traditional marketing techniques used by the utilities be maximized**, with messages that emphasize newly available resources for

the coming heating season and the value of investing in weatherization and heating-system upgrades now for savings this winter and in the future.

- We recommend that **utilities also devote a portion of corporate advertising dollars** to advertising campaigns highlighting their winter-related efficiency services this fall.
- Similarly, we recommend that **agencies serving low-income households expand outreach and marketing of weatherization services**.
- We recommend that **energy efficiency information be displayed on buses and trains operated by the MBTA and Regional Transit Authorities, on electronic billboards** operated by Mass Highway and the MassPike, and at Registry of Motor Vehicle offices. State and regional transportation agencies have excellent opportunities for reaching the public.
- We recommend that media outlets **publish and broadcast stories of households at all income levels taking control of their heating bills** by weatherizing their homes. Utilities, CAP agencies, and their marketing partners (such as Energy Bucks) should work with DOER to identify subjects for such stories and make them available to news outlets.

### *Promoting and Assisting Self-Help Heating Efficiency Efforts*

While some major measures such as blow-in wall insulation and heating system upgrades require professional installation, many weatherization tasks such as air sealing, weather stripping, attic insulation, and installation of programmable thermostats can be performed by anyone who has proper instruction.

- We recommend that home-improvement centers and hardware stores, which offer free or low-cost weatherization workshops, **use their Web sites and printed advertising flyers to increase awareness of and participation** in these instructional programs.
- We recommend that **instructional materials, including videos, on do-it-yourself efficiency projects be produced by state agencies in collaboration with private partners** and made available on state, city, and utility Web sites (such as MassSave.com) and community access cable television stations.
- We recommend that media outlets work with state agencies **to publish and produce "how-to" stories and television segments on heating efficiency**, with detailed instructions and illustrations, for Home & Garden newspaper sections and "news you can use" television news segments this fall, and feature them on their Web sites for ongoing use by readers and viewers.

### *Promoting Strategies for Managing Heating Dollars*

Lower- and fixed-income populations, such as the elderly, are especially hard pressed by heating costs. It will be particularly important for them to marshal their resources carefully over the course of the winter, and take advantage of as many heat-saving tips as can be provided to them in the months before cold weather arrives.

- We recommend that the state, municipalities, and a variety of service agencies **distribute heat-saving advice, which include weatherization information but also heat- and money-management tips**. These tips should include advice on signing up for 12-month budgets for heating bills, using heat as sparingly as possible during the fall, keeping thermostats low and taking every opportunity to turn them down overnight and when out of the house, saving heating dollars for later in the winter. Advice should be provided as well on

the recent DPU order providing for more protective low-income discount rates for gas and electric utility customers, and the availability of arrearage management programs.

- Also, it is not too soon to **get heating-emergency information** (see below) **into the hands of vulnerable populations, well ahead of the cold weather**. We recommend that this information, which could come in the form of easy-to-read brochures and flyers, translated into key languages, be distributed through partnerships with state and local agencies that serve these populations, including:
    - ◊ Department of Transitional Assistance and Department of Social Services offices, case workers, and social workers
    - ◊ Public Housing Authorities
    - ◊ Councils on Aging, local Senior Centers, Meals On Wheels programs
    - ◊ hospitals and community health centers
    - ◊ Visiting Nurse, Home Health, and Home Care providers
    - ◊ immigrant offices and advocacy groups
    - ◊ religious groups and other voluntary service organizations
    - ◊ food banks

### *Coping with Heating Emergencies*

Despite best efforts this fall, heating crises will inevitably arise this winter, and may reach unprecedented proportions due to the rise in fuel prices. Measures proposed elsewhere in this report to help individuals and families cope with loss of heat or the threat thereof, such as the 2-1-1 Hotline, warming centers, and emergency shelters (see Emergency Response), must be matched with communications efforts to make sure those who are affected know where to turn. Such information must be included in heating tips distributed to vulnerable populations in the fall through networks of service agencies, but come winter, there will be need for a mass media campaign to avoid cold-weather tragedies. Pared down to the simplest of messages, emergency information must become ubiquitous, so that no one at risk of illness or even death from lack of heat is unaware of where to go for help. We recommend that this campaign include:

- **a public awareness campaign promoting energy efficiency and disseminating heating emergency information** (see above) consisting of high-quality, high-impact advertisements and public service announcements produced by the state's top advertising firms, working in collaboration with state agencies, and broadcast prominently and strategically with the cooperation of television and radio stations across the Commonwealth, in addition to transit and outdoor advertisements, to be paid for with $500,000 of RGGI auction proceeds.

Winter Energy Costs Task Force

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