

Fuel Assistance Programs

A consumer tip sheet



A Publication of the
Massachusetts
Department of Energy Resources
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Commonwealth of Massachusetts Programs

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) through their Community Services Division oversees a number of energy assistance programs. These programs are administered locally through Non-Profit Agencies. To find the Non-Profit Agency closest to you, call the DHCD Heat Hotline at 1-800-632-8175 or visit www.mass.gov/dhcd and click on heating assistance. Specific programs offered are outlined below. You can also call 211 to get a list of all state programs related to energy and other services.

Heating Bill Assistance

The Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) operates between November 1st and April 30th, offering financial assistance to residents whom are at or below 60% of the state median income level. LIHEAP pays benefits based on household income. Local Non-Profit Agencies determine income eligibility. These agencies make direct payments on your behalf to your primary heating vendor (oil, propane, wood, coal, gas, or electric utility). Payments are made up to a maximum dollar amount for eligible households.

Please note: Eligibility for LIHEAP may also qualify customers for the Discount Rates from electric, gas and telephone utilities

Heating System Assistance

Heating Emergency Assistance Retrofit Task Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP). HEARTWAP provides heating system services to low-income households. The program operates year-round through local Non-Profit Agencies. Households with incomes up to 60% of the state median income level are eligible for HEARTWAP. During the winter months, the program serves primarily as an emergency intervention service, providing low-income households with help for heating system problems. During the spring and summer months, HEARTWAP provides heating system maintenance services subject to the availability of funds.

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Weatherization Assistance

Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). WAP assists low-income households in reducing their heating bills by providing full-scale home energy conservation services (also called weatherization). Households qualifying for **LIHEAP** or receiving Aid to Families with Children or Social Security Income are eligible for WAP. Due to limited funding, priority points are awarded to households with members who are elderly, handicapped, children under the age of seven, or Native Americans. Tenants (with landlord approval) and homeowners are eligible for weatherization. The program also operates year-round through local **Non-Profit** Agencies. Please note that eligibility for this program is 60% of the state median income level, same as LIHEAP.

Other Energy Assistance Programs

The [Massachusetts Good Neighbor Energy Fund](#) offers one-time grants for eligible utility consumers between 60%-80% of the state median income. Heating oil consumers are now eligible. Call **1-800-334-3047** for more information. In area code 413 call: **1-800-262-1320**.

[Citizens Energy](#) provides energy assistance for heating oil and natural gas customers. Heating oil: To apply call **1-877-JOE-4-OIL** (1-877-563-4645)

Other Shopping Options

Even if you are not eligible for the programs described, you may still have options to reduce your heating costs or spread them out over the year.

For Oil Heat Customers

Oil Co-Ops: You may consider joining an oil cooperative (co-op). Co-ops often save their members money on their oil and other services, such as energy efficiency services. They may offer discounts to low-income customers. Many co-ops also offer discount membership fees for senior citizens.

[Mass. Energy Consumers Alliance](#)
1-800-287-3950, info@massenergy.org or
www.massenergy.com

[Cape Self Reliance Corporation](#)
1-888-808-0120, reliance@reliance.org or
<http://www.reliance.org/oil-cooperative.asp>

[Pioneer Valley Heating Oil Cooperative](#)
1-413-586-7350 x289,
www.umass.edu/ofr/oilcoop.php

[Center for Environmental Technology](#)
(partnered with Mass Energy Consumer Alliance)
1-800-287-3950 x4 (at Mass Energy) or
www.cetonline.org

(For complaints or problems about fixed-price contracts or other heating oil issues, call the **Attorney General's Office at 617-727-8400**)

Budget Payment Plans: Some dealers offer payment plans, allowing you to pay your heating bill over time rather than at the time of delivery. Check with your dealer to see whether this option is available for you.

For Natural Gas and Electric Customers

[The Department of Public Utilities](#) approves Natural Gas and Electric rates.

Contact your utility to see if you qualify for the Discount Rate. Utility customers may also qualify for LIHEAP and other energy assistance programs offered by utilities.

Consumers can also check with their utility/distribution company to see whether they offer Level-Pay (or Budget) Billing. This option allows customers to pay the same amount each month. Each year your utility will reconcile your bill. Then you will receive a credit (if you overpaid) or a bill (if you underpaid) for the balance.