

Press Release

**Record Number of Households Receive Energy Assistance
Shut-Offs Exceed 4.3 Million Households in 2009**

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RECORD NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVE ENERGY ASSISTANCE

State directors of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) today released the results of their FY 2009 state recipient survey. The number of households receiving heating assistance reached record levels for the second year in a row, increasing from 6.1 million (5.8 million heating and 0.3 million cooling) to 8.3 million (7.7 million heating and 0.6 million cooling). Eleven states reported increases of more than 50%: California 162%, Texas 122%, Florida 104%, Nevada 80%, Arizona 80%, Oklahoma 76.3%, Kentucky 72.1%, Delaware 71%, Tennessee 62%, Oregon 55%, and Washington 54%. (Table 1)

For FY 2010, the National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA), representing the state LIHEAP directors, is projecting an increase of 20% in the number of families applying for assistance based on initial application rates. The current funding level will not be sufficient to meet the need if current trends continue. In the absence of supplemental funding, states will have few choices other than to reduce benefits, tighten eligibility requirements or close programs early.

UTILITY SHUT-OFFS REMAIN AT HIGH LEVELS

Utility shut-offs and arrearages remained at high levels with approximately 4.3 million households shut off from power in FY 2009 up from 4.1 million in 2008. These families owed a total of \$1.2 billion up from \$1.0 billion in FY 2008 (Table 2). The average amount owed increased from \$253 to \$279. Approximately 12.5 million households were at least 30 days behind in their utility bills in FY 2009 as compared to 13.1 million in FY 2008. These families owed about \$3.4 billion as compared to \$3.6 billion in FY 2008. The average amount owed increased from \$272 to \$276.

While arrearage and shut-off rates remain high, the situation could have been significantly worse if Congress had not increased LIHEAP funding from \$2.57 billion in FY 2008 to \$5.1 billion in FY 2009. Nevertheless, only 18% of the eligible households received assistance. (Table 3)

HOME HEATING COSTS REMAIN HIGH SHOW MODEST DECLINE

Average energy prices are projected by the Energy Information Administration to decline modestly by \$76 from \$1,038 to \$962. Prices in the cold weather states are expected to be significantly higher, for example those using heating oil in the Northeast are expected to pay close to \$2,000 this winter, almost double the national average. The average share of home heating costs covered by LIHEAP increased from 33.3% to 47.7%. The average grant increased from \$330 to \$495 largely because of the increase in the appropriation level. (Table 4)

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