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GOVERNOR KATHY HOCHUL

GOVERNOR HOCHUL LAUNCHES STATEWIDE CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTING HEATING AND UTILITY ASSISTANCE FOR STRUGGLING NEW YORKERS

Campaign Urges Eligible New Yorkers to Apply for Various State Programs to Help Pay Heating and Utility Expenses as Winter Months Approach

Consumer Tips and Best Practices Offered to Help Renters and Homeowners Guard Against Rising Utility Costs

Governor Kathy Hochul today launched a new [digital media campaign](#) designed to raise awareness of the various state programs available to help struggling New Yorkers pay heating and utility expenses to avoid potential service interruptions during the cold weather months ahead. With utility prices expected to spike this season, the campaign will also provide tips and best practices to help contend with higher-than-average home heating costs.

"Rising heating and utility costs in the winter months can be enough to break the bank for many New Yorkers already struggling to make ends meet," **Governor Hochul said.** "This new campaign will highlight the multitude of programs and resources available to those in need—from direct financial assistance to free weatherization workshops offered to low-income homeowners and renters. Connecting people to these programs is critical to ensuring that people can heat their homes in the freezing months ahead."

Heating and Utility Assistance

Eligible homeowners and renters may apply for the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), which can provide up to \$751 depending on income, household size and how they heat their home. A family of four may have a maximum gross monthly income of \$5,249 or an annual gross income of \$62,983 and still qualify for benefits—a modest increase from the previous year's threshold.

Administered by the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, applications for HEAP are accepted in-person at [local departments of social services](#) or by telephone, with funding provided on a first-come, first-served basis. Residents outside of New York City may also [apply online](#) for regular heating assistance benefits. New York State is also providing \$150 million in federal funding to help low-income households pay heating utility arrears. This Regular Arrears Supplement is available to households who are eligible for HEAP and behind on their heating utility bills, but that

do not qualify for the utility assistance offered by New York's Emergency Rental Assistance Program. The one-time payments through the regular arrears supplement can cover all accumulated heating utility arrears up to \$10,000 per household, with applications for assistance accepted at local departments of social services in person or by telephone.

So far, roughly 523,000 households have received \$158.6 million in regular HEAP benefits during the 2021-22 heating season. Likewise, more than \$79 million has been paid on behalf of 50,000 households for the Regular Arrears Supplement, which opened for applications in late September.

OTDA is also accepting applications for its heating equipment repair or replacement benefit. Eligible homeowners can now apply for up to \$3,000 for repair or \$6,500 for replacement of a furnace, boiler or other direct heating equipment necessary to keep the household's primary heating source working. Additionally, eligible households can receive energy efficiency services, which includes the cleaning of primary heating equipment to allow for its safe and efficient operation.

Starting Jan. 3, HEAP will also provide a one-time emergency benefit to eligible households that are facing a heating emergency.

State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Executive Deputy Commissioner Barbara C. Guinn said, "For far too many New Yorkers, the cost of home heating poses a significant burden on their household budget, even before factoring in the anticipated increase in these expenses this winter. These programs are aimed at alleviating some of that burden and helping low-income households throughout our state make ends meet during the cold weather months."

Electric and natural gas bills are expected to be higher for the 2021-2022 winter season than last year, with natural gas projected to increase by an average of about 21 percent statewide, according to the [New York Public Service Commission](#). Given this projection, the New York State Division of Consumer Protection is offering tips for consumers to deal with the higher-than-average home heating prices that are expected this winter season:

- **Take steps to be more energy efficient.** Consumers can take small steps at home, such as lowering the thermostat by a few degrees, using curtains that help keep heat in, and adding weather stripping to windows and doors -all that are either no or low-cost improvements. NYSERDA offers energy saving [tips](#) for residents and homeowners that can lower energy usage. Income eligible customers may also qualify for reduced-cost or free energy upgrades to their homes through [Empower New York](#) and [Assisted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®](#) programs. Homeowners should also check with their local gas and electric utility companies to access discounted products and services that can help them lower their energy costs.
- **Get a free energy audit.** New York homeowners are eligible for a free home energy assessment through NYSERDA's

improvements, then assist them in connecting with NYSERDA's low-interest financing programs.

- **Upgrade to a clean energy heat pump.** With rising fuel costs, homeowners may consider switching from fossil fuel heating equipment to a clean energy heat pump system. The [NYS Clean Heat](#) program offers rebates to homeowners to install both ground source (geothermal) heat pumps and cold-climate air source heat pumps.
- **Join a Clean Heating and Cooling Campaign.** NYSERDA supports communities across the state in implementing [community-based outreach and education campaigns](#) for clean heating and cooling. These campaigns are designed to help consumers understand heat pump and home improvement technologies and their benefits. Community members can negotiate rates collectively, select an installer competitively, and decrease up-front costs by enrolling in a local campaign.
- **Know your rights and protections.** The New York State Home Energy Fair Practices Act has comprehensive protections for residential customers regarding their utility services. These rights include the option to pay bills in installments, a cap on late fees, sufficient notice prior to shut-off of services, and protections for those on a fixed income or with medical conditions. Learn about these from the Department of Public Service at [AskPSC](#).
- **Consider bill payment options.** Residential consumers can inquire with their utility provider about billing options that allow for deferred payments or 'budget billing' to even out utility bills that are higher in one season and lower in another. This can help structure payments to make it easier to navigate costs.
- **Sign up for community solar.** Community solar allows New Yorkers to save money on their electric bills each month. Consumers can subscribe to a community solar project and start receiving credits on their regular electric bill for clean energy produced by a solar farm. Renters, co-op/condo owners and businesses can save money by accessing the clean energy produced by these solar farms. Learn more about how to sign up for community solar on NYSERDA's [website](#).

New York State Secretary of State Rossana Rosado said, "The long-lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are rippling through many households, and the increase in electric and gas bills is yet another thing to worry about. This campaign will help highlight the many resources available here in New York to help cover utility costs. I encourage all New Yorkers to take advantage of the many programs and follow simple energy saving tips that can help keep everyone warm during the cold winter months."

Department of Public Service CEO Rory M. Christian said, "The Department of Public Service actively works with utilities in New York State to ensure that consumers are aware of ways to reduce their energy bills this winter. In addition, we closely monitor utilities to ensure they are offering all possible consumer protections so service continues without interruption during the cold winter months."

NYSERDA President and CEO Doreen M. Harris said, "All New Yorkers can take simple steps to save energy and lower their utility bills year-round, including turning off lights when not in use, using no heat options when drying clothes or dishes or signing up for a local community solar project. Additionally, long-term energy savings measures can also be explored, such as implementing home improvements that reduce energy

leaks and make homes more comfortable, investing in energy efficient lighting or appliances, and adopting clean energy heating and cooling options like high efficiency heat pumps, all which help to reduce energy costs even further."

Senator Roxanne J. Persaud, chairwoman of the New York State Senate Social Services Committee, said, "Every New Yorker should know about HEAP. It is no secret that the number of energy burdened New York households eligible for assistance far exceed the number of applications for heating or cooling assistance, weatherization and repairs under the HEAP program."

Assemblymember Linda B. Rosenthal, chairwoman of the state Assembly Committee on Social Services, said, "As we head into the winter months, it is vital that New Yorkers struggling to pay their heat and utility bills know that that the state has programs available to help, such as HEAP and the emergency utility assistance program. Thousands of New Yorkers were thrust into financial chaos as a result of COVID-19, and many families are still tying themselves in knots to put food on their tables and cover the costs of rent, heat and other utilities. This vital assistance is a lifeline, and I'm pleased the state is doing outreach."

Weatherization Workshops

The New York Power Authority, through its Environmental Justice Community Energy Education programming, conducts weatherization workshops for low-income homeowners and renters. Workshop participants learn about simple ways to lower their heating and cooling costs, including low-cost changes they can make in their homes to help prepare for winter and summer energy needs. These interactive sessions are taught by NYPA's expert staff, in partnership with community-based organizations, including places of worship and neighborhood organizations.

After each workshop, NYPA distributes free weatherization kits that contain tools to implement many of the weatherization measures discussed during the workshop. Workshops and materials are translated into different languages to ensure weatherization messages are appropriately communicated to audience members that may speak different languages. NYPA's Environmental Justice education programs are designed to provide energy literacy and awareness for historically disadvantaged communities. Eligible entities include organizations that serve residents who live within proximity of [NYPA facilities](#).

New York Power Authority Interim President and CEO Justin E. Driscoll said, "NYPA's Environmental Justice program, in line with our commitment to provide resources to disadvantaged communities, offers free weatherization and energy literacy workshops to community members living near [our generation facilities](#). We provide low to no cost tips and tools that can be used to prepare your home for cold winter weather, to keep your home warm and your utility bills low."

Workshops are held near NYPA facilities in the North Country, Western New York, Central New York, the Capital Region, the Bronx, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island and Long Island. A video with a sampling of energy saving tips is

Environmental Justice Team at environmental.justice@nypa.gov to host an energy literacy program or to find out about [upcoming workshops](#).

Another available resource is New York's Energy Affordability Policy (EAP) that requires the state's major electric and natural gas utilities to provide monthly bill discounts to income eligible customers. To address higher energy costs this winter, the New York Public Service Commission increased the budget for the EAP program by \$129 million to \$367 million, which means 95,000 more low-income families will be able to receive benefits, which vary by utility. The program expansion will result in more targeted bill discounts.

To enroll in the utility bill discount program, customers should contact their individual utility:

Con Edison Customers: [Con Ed](#)
Orange & Rockland Customers: [O&R](#)
National Grid Customers: [National Grid](#)
National Fuel Gas Customers: [NFG](#)
NYSEG Customers: [NYSEG](#)
Rochester Gas & Electric Customers: [RGE](#)
PSEG-LI Customers: [PSEG](#)
Central Hudson Customers: [CH](#)

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