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## Managing Your Utility Bills

You may have heard that the price of electricity for this upcoming winter season has increased due to market prices. Therefore, utilities that buy energy supply in the market have experienced price spikes. To help manage the increases the Office of Consumer Advocate encourages you to take steps to reduce your electricity usage.



Many people have already implemented energy conservation measures, which can lower your electric bill. For those that haven't or those that are looking to do more please visit [www.nhsaves.com](http://www.nhsaves.com), [www.nh.gov/oep](http://www.nh.gov/oep) or 603-271-2155, and [www.energy.gov](http://www.energy.gov) or 1-800-dial-DOE for ideas and tips on how to conserve. You can also contact your utility and ask them for suggestions for conservation and information about programs available to you. Some of the programs available are income based and others are not.



Renewable energy (i.e., solar, wind, geothermal, wood) could be a solution for you. There are rebates available right now at the Public Utilities Commission to reduce the cost of the initial investment, see [www.puc.nh.gov/SustainableEnergy](http://www.puc.nh.gov/SustainableEnergy). To further offset the cost of installing renewable energy options you may be eligible for rebates or other incentives from your local, state & federal government. See, [www.dsireusa.org](http://www.dsireusa.org).



Consider reviewing your options for competitive energy supply. Please be careful to choose a fixed rate term, as the variable rates expose you to the risks of the market. See [www.puc.nh.gov](http://www.puc.nh.gov) for more details.



There are programs in New Hampshire to assist you with paying your utility and heating bills, such as:

- § Low Income Heating Assistance Program (LIHEAP) – Qualified households receive assistance for heating costs. For information regarding eligibility and to apply please contact your local Community Action Agency.
- § Electric Assistance Program (EAP) – Qualified households receive assistance for electricity costs. For information regarding eligibility and to apply please contact your local Community Action Agency. [Electric Assistance Program](#) (NHPUC)

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- § Natural Gas Low Income Rate - Qualified households receive assistance for natural gas costs. For information regarding eligibility and to apply please contact your gas company. [Gas Assistance Programs](#) (NHPUC)
- § [Lifeline](#) - Qualified telephone customers receive a monthly reduction on their residential, local telephone bill. For information regarding eligibility and to apply, contact your local telephone company or the Public Utilities Commission at 1-800-852-3793.
- § Neighbor Helping Neighbor – Qualified households receive assistance for natural gas or electricity costs. For information regarding eligibility and to apply please contact your local Community Action Agency.
- § Project Care – Qualified New Hampshire Electric Cooperative members receive assistance for electricity costs. For information regarding eligibility please contact NHEC. [http://nhec.com/community\\_projectcare.php](http://nhec.com/community_projectcare.php)

To obtain the contact information for your local Community Action Agency call 211 or visit the website of the agency in your county.

Belknap and Merrimack Counties: [www.bm-cap.org](http://www.bm-cap.org)  
Rockingham County: [www.rcaction.org](http://www.rcaction.org)  
Hillsborough County: [www.snhs.org](http://www.snhs.org)  
Cheshire & Sullivan Counties: [www.scshehelps.org](http://www.scshehelps.org)  
Strafford County: [www.straffcap.org](http://www.straffcap.org)  
Coos, Carroll and Grafton Counties: [www.tccap.org](http://www.tccap.org)

Balanced billing and budget billing are available from most utilities. Payment arrangements for customers behind on bills are also available from all utilities. To learn more about your payment options, contact your utility. If, after contacting your utility, you need assistance negotiating a payment arrangement, please contact the Public Utilities Commission Consumer Affairs Department at 1-800-852-3793. The Winter Disconnection Rules provide certain protections from disconnection to residential customers during the winter months. To learn more about the Winter Disconnection Rules please visit <http://www.puc.nh.gov/Consumer/winterdisconnectionrules.htm> or contact the Public Utilities Commission directly.

If you wish to help families in need during this difficult time, please participate in the statewide Neighbor Helping Neighbor program, which has a website where people can donate directly, [www.nhnfund.org](http://www.nhnfund.org).

**The OCA is an independent state agency representing the interests of residential utility ratepayers. To contact the OCA call 603-271-1172, email at [oca@oca.nh.gov](mailto:oca@oca.nh.gov), or visit the website at [www.oca.nh.gov](http://www.oca.nh.gov).**