



Energy Assistance Programs 2011-2012: PUCO Guide to Assistance with Paying Electric and Natural Gas Bills

Assistance is available for both gas and electric bills. The assistance may be in the form of a reduction of your heating bill and/or a set amount based on your income to be paid each month. Eligibility for these programs is usually based on household income.

Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)

What is HEAP?

HEAP is a federally funded program administered by the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD). It is designed to help eligible low-income Ohioans meet the high costs of home heating. HEAP pays a one-time payment for most PUCO-regulated utility customers reflecting their usage for the current winter heating season.

Who is eligible?

The total household income of an applicant must be at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines listed below:

Size of Household	Yearly Income Limit	Three Month Income Limit
1	up to \$21,780	\$5,445
2	\$29,420	\$7,355
3	\$37,060	\$9,265
4	\$44,700	\$11,175
5	\$52,340	\$13,085
6	\$59,980	\$14,995

For households with more than six members, add \$7,640 per member for 12 months or \$1,910 for three months.

How do I sign up?

Call (800) 282-0880, TDD (800) 686-1557 or write to P.O. Box 1240, Columbus, Ohio 43266-0583. HEAP applications may also be downloaded from the Ohio Department of Development Web site at www.odod.state.oh.us or picked up at Community Action Agencies, post offices and libraries. *Note: Each household should mail only one HEAP application.*

Percentage of Income Payment Plan Plus (PIPP Plus)

PIPP Plus allows eligible customers to make affordable monthly energy payments on a year-round basis. When a PIPP Plus household pays its monthly PIPP Plus payment on-time and in-full, some of their old debt and the rest of that month's bill goes away in the form of a credit on their utility account.

Who is eligible?

- Your utility company must be regulated by the PUCO. Duke Energy Ohio, Ohio Gas, Eastern Natural Gas, Pike Natural Gas, and Southeastern Natural Gas will offer a slightly different version of PIPP Plus. If you are a customer of one of these companies, call your company to learn more. Some small gas companies are not required to offer PIPP Plus.
- You must apply for all energy assistance for which you are eligible.
- You must have a gross yearly household income at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines (see income eligibility chart below). If you are not eligible based on the 12-month "test," you may qualify for PIPP Plus based on your income for the most recent three months.

Size of Household	Yearly Income Limit	Three Month Income Limit
1	up to \$16,335	\$4,084
2	\$22,065	\$5,516
3	\$27,795	\$6,949
4	\$33,525	\$8,381
5	\$39,255	\$9,814
6	\$44,985	\$11,246

For households with more than six members, add \$5,730 per member for 12 months or \$1,433 for three months.

What will my monthly payment be?

Electric and natural gas customers who qualify pay \$10 or 6 percent of their gross monthly household income, whichever is greater, to the utility company each month. If the utility provides both gas and electric services or if the customer has an all-electric home, the payment is \$10 or 10 percent of the gross monthly income, whichever is greater.

How do I sign up for PIPP Plus?

Contact your local energy assistance program provider. You may also enroll in PIPP Plus by completing the Energy Assistance Program application and mailing it to The Ohio Department of Development. You must provide proof of your gross monthly household income for at least the last three months. To find your local energy assistance program provider or to obtain an application, please call (800) 282-0880 or visit <http://development.ohio.gov/cdd/ocs/energyhelp.htm>.

Will I have to pay a deposit when I sign up?

No. There are no deposits for PIPP Plus households. If you paid a deposit in the past, that amount will be used to reduce any debt you owe the utility company.

Updated October 21, 2011

When is my first payment due?

Your first payment will be due when you enroll in PIPP Plus. If you are unable to pay at enrollment, the installment can be added to your next monthly bill, but you will be billed for two payments. You will also lose the arrearage credit for the first month.

What are the new benefits of paying my PIPP Plus amount on-time and in-full?

When PIPP Plus payments are made on-time and in-full, customers earn an incentive credit and an arrearage credit. Each time you pay your required monthly payment on-time and in-full, you no longer owe the rest of that month's billed amount. You also receive a 1/24 credit toward any old debt. If you make full, on-time payments for 24 straight months, all of your arrearages will be eliminated.

Will fees be assessed for late payments?

No, but you will not receive the incentive or arrearage crediting benefits that come from paying your PIPP Plus payment amount on-time and in-full.

What do I need to do to stay on PIPP Plus?

Natural gas: Every 12 months you must provide proof that your gross monthly household income is at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level to remain a PIPP Plus customer. At that time, you must also make up any PIPP Plus payments that you missed over the past 12 months. You will have one billing cycle to make up those payments, or you will be removed from PIPP Plus, and your entire bill balance will become due. At that time, your utility may offer you an extended payment plan to help you avoid disconnection.

Electric: To remain a PIPP Plus customer, you must provide proof of your gross monthly household income at least every 12 months. If you do not provide proof of income you will be removed from PIPP Plus, and your entire bill balance will become due. At that time, your utility may offer you an extended payment plan to help you avoid disconnection.

Can I participate in customer choice and PIPP Plus at the same time?

No. If you are participating in a customer choice program, and then become eligible for and participate in PIPP Plus, you will automatically be switched to the utility. If you were under a contract with a marketer, they may assess an early termination fee if you switch to PIPP Plus before your contract expires.

What are my options if I become income ineligible for PIPP Plus?

Natural gas: Customers who become income ineligible for PIPP Plus, but are current on their PIPP Plus payment, will be placed on Graduate PIPP Plus. This new program provides customers with a 12-month transition from PIPP Plus to full payments. Under Graduate PIPP Plus, customers pay an average of their most recent PIPP Plus amount and a budget billing amount calculated by their utility. Graduate PIPP Plus customers who make payments on-time and in-full will continue to receive credits toward their monthly bill balance and a 1/12 credit to their old debt. Some small gas companies are not required to offer Graduate PIPP Plus.

Electric: The electric transition and arrearage crediting program provides customers with a 12 month transition from PIPP Plus to full payments. Under the Electric Graduate PIPP Plus program, customers

Updated October 21, 2011

pay either an average of their most recent PIPP Plus amount and a budget billing amount calculated by their utility, or a regular budget payment or the cost of the electric service billed each month. Electric Graduate PIPP Plus customers who make payments on-time and in-full will continue to receive credits toward their monthly bill balance and a 1/12 credit to their old debt.

Winter Crisis Program (formerly Emergency Energy Assistance Program -- E-HEAP)

A special component of HEAP, the Winter Crisis Program (WCP), is administered by Community Action Agencies throughout Ohio. The WCP provides assistance once per heating season to eligible low-income households that are disconnected, threatened with disconnection, or have less than a ten-day supply of bulk fuel. For further information, contact your local Community Action Agency.

Who is eligible?

The total household income of an applicant must be at or below 200 percent of the 2009 federal poverty guidelines listed below:

Size of Household	Yearly Income Limit	Three Month Income Limit
1	up to \$21,780	\$5,445
2	\$29,420	\$7,355
3	\$37,060	\$9,265
4	\$44,700	\$11,175
5	\$52,340	\$13,085
6	\$59,980	\$14,995

For households with more than six members, add \$7,640 per member for 12 months or \$1,910 for three months.

How do I sign up?

Applications for Emergency HEAP are accepted through March 31. Contact your local Community Action Agency to sign up.

Summer Crisis Program

A special component of HEAP, the Summer Crisis Program provides summer cooling assistance for low-income elderly households and for Ohioans with qualifying medical conditions. The program applies to electric utilities only.

What are the benefits?

One-time payment assistance of up to \$175 to be put towards:

- Electric bill payment,
- Air conditioning unit, or
- Fan

Who is eligible?

- You do not have to be enrolled in PIPP or have received a disconnection notice to be eligible for the Summer Crisis Program.

- Households must have a gross annual income of 200 percent of the federal poverty level listed below and meet one of the following criteria:
 - Have a member of the household who is at least 60 years old; or
 - Provide physician documentation of medical necessity.

Size of Household	Yearly Income Limit	Three Month Income Limit
1	up to \$21,780	\$5,445
2	\$29,420	\$7,355
3	\$37,060	\$9,265
4	\$44,700	\$11,175
5	\$52,340	\$13,085
6	\$59,980	\$14,995

For households with more than six members, add \$7,640 per member for 12 months or \$1,910 for three months.

How do I sign up?

Applications for the Summer Crisis Program are accepted from July 1 through August 31. Contact your local Community Action Agency to sign up.

HeatShare Programs

The HeatShare programs are programs administered by the Salvation Army to help qualifying households pay for natural gas bills. These programs typically run from January until May, or until funds are depleted. For more information about the HeatShare program or to receive assistance, please contact your local Salvation Army.

Columbia Gas of Ohio HeatShare Program

Customers of Columbia Gas of Ohio are eligible for the HeatShare program if they have an annual gross household income at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Households experiencing unexpected financial hardships may also be eligible for the program, determined on a case-by-case basis. The HeatShare program provides Columbia customers with a one-time assistance grant of up to \$250. Customers are only eligible for HeatShare once per year, and the assistance cannot be applied toward security deposits or bills that are not required to maintain service.

Dominion East Ohio EnergyShare Program

The Dominion East Ohio EnergyShare program is designed to provide fuel assistance to pay for any type of winter heating bill. To qualify for the program, customers must live within the Dominion service territory, must have a termination notice, and must have exhausted other resources for state and federal fuel assistance. Senior citizens age 60 and older do not need a termination notice to qualify. Applicants must also meet one of the following criteria:

- Annual household income at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty guidelines;
- Head of the household is unemployed; or

Updated October 21, 2011

- Have a demonstrated personal or family crisis.

EnergyShare can provide customers with assistance of up to \$500 for heating bills and up to \$250 for deposits. The funds cannot be used for unauthorized usage, bills older than one heating season, or unpaid balances from the previous heating season. To receive assistance, the applicant must have their name on the utility account or live at the listed residence. For more information, contact your local Salvation Army or Dominion East Ohio at (800) 362-7557.

Duke Energy Ohio HeatShare Fuel Fund

Eligibility for the Duke Energy Ohio HeatShare program is based upon need, and households must be subject to disconnection in order to qualify. Eligible customers can receive a one-time assistance payment of \$300. For more information, contact the Salvation Army at (513) 721-0795.

Extended Payment Plans

PUCO-regulated gas and electric companies have the following extended payment plans available to help you to make affordable payments and maintain service:

- The One-third Plan, or Winter Heating Season Plan, is only offered from November 1 to April 15 and requires you to pay 1/3 of your total account balance each month.
- The One-sixth plan requires you to pay six equal monthly payments on your past due amount in addition to your monthly budget payment.
- The One-ninth Plan requires you to pay nine equal monthly payments on your past due amount in addition to your monthly budget payment.

These two plans are available to all residential customers regardless of income. For more information, contact your utility company or your local Community Action Agency. You may also call the PUCO toll-free: Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., EST:

(800) 686-PUCO (7826) (voice)

(800) 686-1570 (TDD)

Some utility companies may offer other emergency assistance plans. For more information, please contact your utility company.

Energy Assistance for Military Personnel and their Families

The Patriot Plan, a program providing protections and benefits to military personnel and their families, can assist qualifying customers with maintaining utility service while serving on active duty. Under the plan, Ohio's natural gas and electric utilities cannot disconnect the residential utility service of any military reservist or National Guardsman deployed on active duty for nonpayment.

Upon return from active duty, utility companies must offer customers a period of time equal to the length of their deployment to pay any arrearages that may have accumulated. Additional time may be requested by a customer if the amount in arrearages presents a hardship. Utility companies are also

Updated October 21, 2011

prohibited from charging any late payment fees or interest to qualifying customers during the period of deployment or the repayment period.

The Patriot Plan does not apply to career active-duty military personnel serving their regular tour of duty. For additional information regarding this benefit, contact your local utility company or the PUCO at (800) 686-PUCO (7826).

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