

DTE ENERGY AND CONSUMERS ENERGY OFFER UTILITY BILL ASSISTANCE

Now that winter is here, it's important that we begin preparing ourselves and our houses for the colder weather. DTE Energy and Consumers Energy offer a number of programs to help customers with their energy bills.

Payment assistance programs offered to customers include: a medical emergencies program to postpone shutoffs in the event of a medical issue, and a shut-off protection plan to spread future bills out over the year and to include equal monthly payments on an unpaid balance in order to avoid a shut-off.

Some consumers and all senior citizens regardless of their income also qualify for DTE Energy's Winter Protection Plan. This program protects seniors and low-income customers from shutoffs between November 1 and March 31. During this period, customers must pay a portion of their estimated annual bill plus regular payments on any past-due bills. After March 31, the required bill payments will increase to cover winter bills. For more information on any of these programs, please call Consumers Energy at 800-477-5050 and DTE Energy at 800-477-4747.

Many assistance programs are available by calling 211 at United Way. Weatherization help is available

for low-income residents. These programs help with caulking, weather stripping, and insulation. Another program that is available is THAW, the Heat and Warmth Fund, which helps people who are facing a shut-off and have exhausted all federal and state funding programs.

The state offers assistance with energy bills through the State Emergency Relief Program in the

Department of Human Services. This program is available to DHS clients and non-DHS clients. For more information, call the Energy Assistance Hotline at 800-292-5650, or visit your local DHS office.

In addition, visit the following websites to learn more about help that is available:

DTE Energy:

<http://www.dteenergy.com/residentialCustomers/billingPayment/paymentPrograms/payAssistance.html>

Consumers Energy: <http://www.consumersenergy.com/welcome.htm>

United Way of Southeastern Michigan: www.uwsem.org/

THAW, the Heat and Warmth Fund: http://www.thawfund.org/how_help/index.html

State Emergency Relief Energy Assistance Programs:

<http://www.michigan.gov/heatingassistance/0,1607,7-215-33211-105989--,00.html>