



**CITIZENS UTILITY BOARD**

Empowering Minnesota Consumers

# What Savvy Energy Consumers Should Know: Prep for Winter Edition

Women's Advocates

Recorded on November 19, 2020



CUB is a  
nonprofit,  
independent  
consumer  
advocate.

# Overview



Your Energy Rights



Resources to Pay Bills



Ways to Save Energy and Money



Steps to Take



# Important COVID-19 Responses

- CenterPoint Energy and Xcel Energy have promised the following during the Governor's peacetime emergency:
  - Suspend disconnections
  - Reconnect previously disconnected
  - Suspend late fees
  - Arrange payment plans
- They will provide 60 days notice after the emergency expires before resuming disconnections

# Focus on What You Can Control

If renting,

- Rent + **Utilities** = housing costs
- When looking for a new place, ask about average energy costs
- Know your rights and responsibilities per your lease
- Encourage landlord to participate in efficiency programs



Time of Rent Energy Disclosure- Starting in Minneapolis in 2021

# Renters Rights

State Statute, 504B.161- Covenants of Landlord

- Requires landlords to “make the premises reasonably energy efficient by installing weatherstripping, caulking, storm windows, and storm doors when any such measure will result in energy procurement cost savings...”

Community Stabilization Project provides education and advice for renters: 651-225-8778

HOME Line provides free legal advice to renters: 612-728-5767

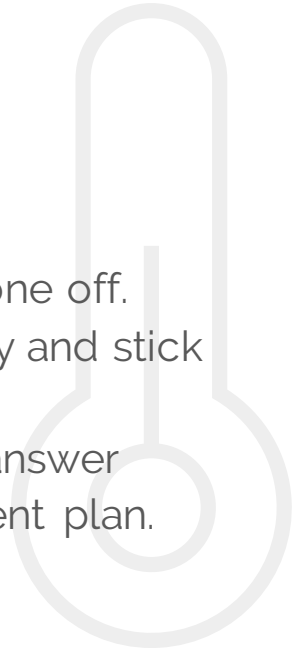


# Cold Weather Rule

- Shut-off protection between October 15-April 15, every year.
- Applies to utilities required to heat your home.
- Utilities must follow specific procedures before shutting someone off.
- The customer must arrangement a payment plan with the utility and stick to it.
- The Public Utilities Commission, Consumers Affairs Office can answer questions and assist consumers to arrange a reasonable payment plan.  
Call 651-296-0406 for questions or help.

## **Important:**

**You can be shut off if you don't set up a payment plan or don't stick with it!**



# Help with Bills

Energy Assistance based on income and family size. Eligibility can qualify you for other assistance.

- Available to renters and homeowners.
- Can be used for utility bills (electric and gas) and delivered fuels.
- Can help with emergency heating repairs.
- Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County: 952-930-3541
- Ramsey/Washington County Residents: 651-645-6445
- Other counties, please call 1-800-657-3710 to find your local provider.
- Apply each year in the fall through May 31. It is first come first served.

## 2021 Maximum Energy Assistance Program Income Guidelines

Household Size	3 Month Max	Annual Income
1	\$7,066	\$28,266
2	\$9,240	\$36,963
3	\$11,415	\$45,660
4	\$13,589	\$54,357
5	\$15,763	\$63,054
6	\$17,937	\$71,751
7	\$18,345	\$73,382



# Help with Bills

## Bill Discounts

- Some utilities including Xcel Energy and Center Point Energy provide additional discounts and credit on past due bills for those eligible for Energy Assistance. The programs are Power On/Gas Affordability Program. Contact Energy Cents at [energycents.org](https://energycents.org) or 651-774-9010.

## Other Potential Sources of Funds

- Call 211 for COVID Housing Assistance
- County Assistance
- Salvation Army Heat Share
- Community Social Service Agencies
- Local Houses of Worship
- Student Services (for students)

# Help with Bills

## Free and Discounted Energy Efficiency Items

Energy Assistance recipients are eligible for free energy audits and could receive free weatherization

- Free emergency repairs are available
- Hennepin County residents, contact Sustainable Resources Center (612-870-4255) for free energy efficiency services (weatherization, water heaters, furnaces) and appliance replacement (fridge, freezers, and window AC units)
- Ramsey County residents, contact Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington County (651-645-6445) & Energy Cents Coalition (651-774-9010)

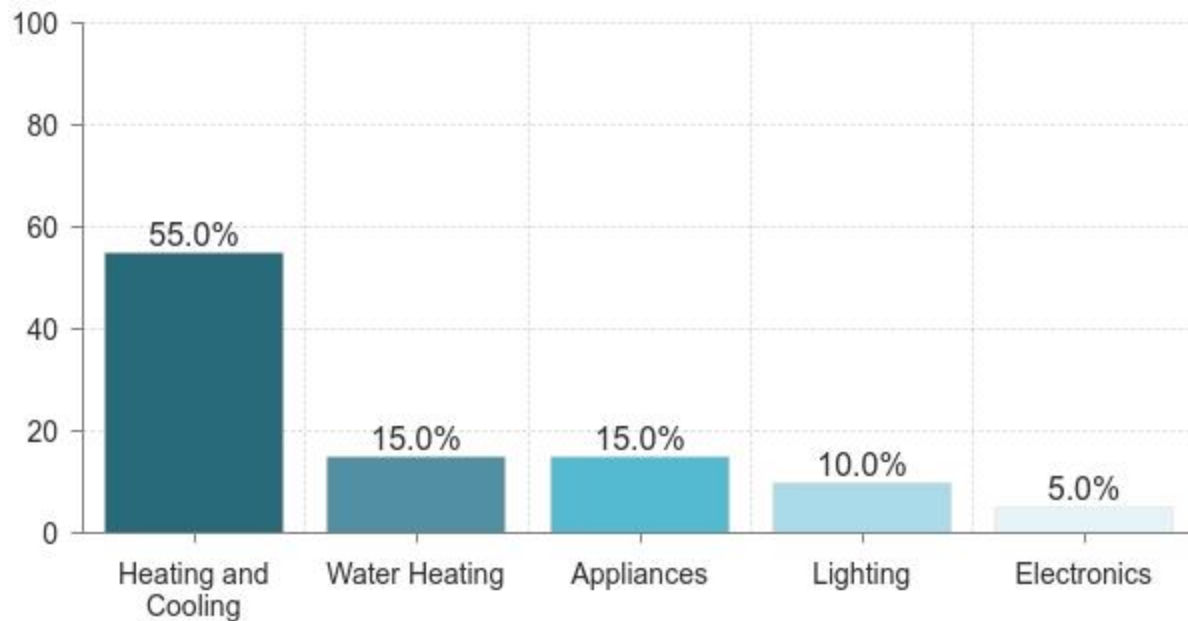
Everyone can contact your utility for free DIY items and discounted/rebated items



# Energy Bills

## Breakdown of Home Energy Usage

Source: MN Dept. of Commerce, Home Energy Guide, August 2018



# Winter Prep

Home Energy Squad Audits – call 651-328-6220

- For single family homes or multi-family with 5 or less units
- Free virtual visits
- Discounted in person audits for Minneapolis & St. Paul residents
- Free in-person audits for income-qualified household
- Includes several free installs
- If you rent, ask for landlord permission

Review recommendations

- Seal leaks up
- Add insulation as needed, take advantage of rebates



# Winter Prep

## Multifamily buildings

- Landlords of 5 unit or more buildings can participate in a free whole building audit provided by Xcel and CenterPoint

## Do It Yourself (DIY)

- Utility DIY kits (free items from CenterPoint)
- Use plastic on drafty windows and draft blockers for doors

## Furnace/boiler Tune Up

- Take advantage of CenterPoint rebate
- Replace filters per technician recommendation



# Use Less Energy: Winter



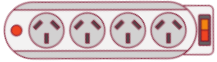
## Control room temperature

- Keep at 68° when home
- Reduce up to 10° while asleep or away, Never lower than 55°
- Use a programmable thermostat to make it easy to manage your temperature
- Use the sun to warm your home
- Wear layers
- Avoid or minimize space heater use

# Use Less Energy



Turn off/unplug electronics when not used (avoid vampire use)



Consider power strips or smart strips



Use LED Light Bulbs



Run a full dishwasher, turn off heated drying; run full loads of laundry, wash with cold water

# Free Energy Bill Consultations

The Citizens Utility Board, a non-profit organization provides free 30-minute energy bill consultations.

- Review your bills, find ways to save money
- Discuss any energy related issue
- Average household saves \$150 in the first
- Over the phone or via video-conferencing

Sign up for a bill clinic at:

<http://cubminnesota.org/our-work/upcoming-events/>  
or call 651-300-4701 ext. 2







# Thank you

**Contact the Citizens Utility Board of  
Minnesota with any follow up questions:**

**[carmenc@cubminnesota.org](mailto:carmenc@cubminnesota.org) or  
call 651-300-4701 ext. 2**



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