

## MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

For Immediate Release

March 15, 2013

### **State's Energy Assistance Program funding is still available to help pay heating bills**

*Low-income households—especially seniors, people with disabilities, families with children—encouraged to apply for benefits*

SAINT PAUL, MN —The Minnesota Department of Commerce, Division of Energy Resources wants low-income Minnesotans—especially seniors, people with disabilities, and families with children—to know that grant funds are still available to help pay their heating bills from the Energy Assistance Program (EAP).

“Even though winter may be coming to an end, cold weather will remain for several weeks and many Minnesotans may struggle to pay their energy bills,” said Commerce Commissioner Mike Rothman. “We still have funds to help households stay warm and we encourage families and individuals who need assistance to apply.”

Rothman said applications for heating assistance are down about 9 percent this year, from about 142,000 applications this time a year ago, to 116,000 so far this year.

The average energy assistance grant is \$500 per household. Households with an income less than 50 percent of the state median income (\$42,789 for a family of four) may qualify and those who do, are served on a first-come, first-served basis while funds last. People have until May 31, when the program year ends, to apply for the Energy Assistance Program.

“We want to ensure that our most vulnerable residents are not faced with no-heat situations,” Rothman said. “Research suggests that seniors in particular may hesitate to seek assistance, so we are reaching out to seniors and others in need to access the heating assistance program.”

#### **How to apply for energy assistance**

The EAP pays the utility company directly on behalf of eligible households. Qualifying families must apply for assistance at the local service provider in their area; Minnesota has 34 local service providers. A list of local service providers and information on applying for the Minnesota Energy Assistance Program is available by calling 1-800-657-3710 or 651-296-5175 or visiting the [Energy Assistance section](#) of the Division of Energy Resources website ([www.energy.mn.gov](http://www.energy.mn.gov)). EAP is federally funded by the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is administered by the Minnesota Department of Commerce.

Other forms of assistance may be available through county social service programs, community-based organizations, and nonprofit agencies. See [www.staywarm.mn.gov](http://www.staywarm.mn.gov) for a list of resources.

**Anne O'Connor**, Communication Director  
Minnesota Department of Commerce  
Office: 651.296.5140; Mobile: 612.889.9807; Fax: 651.297.1959  
[anne.oconnor@state.mn.us](mailto:anne.oconnor@state.mn.us)