



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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**MOTHER NATURE HELPS TO REDUCE HOME HEATING BILLS
THIS WINTER BY AS MUCH AS 29 PERCENT**

Winter Moratorium on Service Disconnections Ends March 15

MERRILLVILLE, Ind. – Warm weather earlier this winter, combined with lower wholesale natural gas prices, helped to reduce home heating bills by as much as 29 percent when compared to the same period a year ago, Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO) announced today.

“This should be welcome news to those customers who used natural gas safely and wisely this winter to heat their homes,” said NIPSCO President Mark Maassel. “While overall bills for the winter heating season may be down, heating bills in late January and February were high due to the extremely cold temperatures we experienced.”

NIPSCO defines the winter heating season as Nov. through March. In Oct. NIPSCO announced that home heating bills could decrease by as much as 30 percent this winter if the Midwest experiences normal temperatures. This winter heating season, the average customer paid approximately \$638 to heat their home. This represents a 29 percent decrease when compared to last winter heating season when the average NIPSCO customer paid nearly \$891 to heat their home.

In Feb., the average NIPSCO customer used 40 percent more natural gas to heat their home, when compared to last Feb. The average temperature in Indiana this Feb. was 21 degrees Fahrenheit – according to the National Climatic Data Center – forcing furnaces to work longer and harder to keep homes warm.

“Our goal is to provide our customers with the tools and resources to stay warm and be safe in their homes,” said Maassel. “Those customers struggling to pay their winter heating bills should contact us now so we have an opportunity to work together to get them the assistance they need to stay connected.”

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HEATING BILLS DECLINE THIS WINTER

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On March 15, the state's moratorium on service disconnections ends. Between Dec. 1 and March 15, natural gas utilities in Indiana do not disconnect service to customers enrolled in the state's Energy Assistance Program and who are behind on their heating bills.

Among the programs available to help customers are:

- **State Energy Assistance Program** – provides qualifying families with bill and crisis assistance. The maximum amount a household can receive is \$535, including a \$200 crisis grant. Household income must be at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level.
- **Winter Warmth Program** – provides qualifying customers with bill and deposit assistance. The maximum amount a customer can receive is up to \$450. Household income must be at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, although there is a “hardship” provision for certain customers – such as those that are temporarily out of work or experiencing a medical issue – who fall out of the established income guideline.
- **Help Thy Neighbor Fund** – provides eligible low-income households and Senior Citizens (60 years or older) who are within 151-200 percent of the federal poverty level with heating assistance to prevent the disruption of gas utility service or assist in the reconnection of gas service. Eligible households may receive a one time benefit up to \$200 in immediate utility bill assistance.
- **Gift of Warmth Fuel Fund** – provides eligible low-income customers whose incomes are at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, and who have received a disconnect notice, with heating bill assistance. NIPSCO matches agency contributions dollar for dollar.
- **Township Trustees** – provides customers with home heating bill assistance. Customers are encouraged to contact their local Township Trustee to see what help is available.

A complete listing of in-take sites for the state Energy Assistance Program, Winter Warmth Program and Gift of Warmth Fuel Fund can be found on NIPSCO's Web site at www.nipSCO.com.

NIPSCO, with headquarters in Merrillville, Ind., is one of the 10 energy distribution companies of NiSource Inc. (NYSE: NI). With over 712,000 natural gas customers and 445,000 electric customers across the northern third of Indiana, NIPSCO is the largest natural gas distribution company, and the second largest electric distribution company, in the state. NiSource distribution companies serve 3.8 million natural gas and electric customers primarily in nine states. More information about NIPSCO is available at www.nipSCO.com.

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