



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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WINTER WARMTH PROGRAM SEES OVERWHELMING NEED WHILE FUNDING NEARS EXHAUSTION

MERRILLVILLE, Ind. – This year's cold winter has been a challenge for some of our natural gas customers. The cold temperatures and higher costs for natural gas combined to create an unprecedented demand for Northern Indiana Public Service Company's (NIPSCO) Winter Warmth energy assistance program.

NIPSCO's Winter Warmth program provides qualifying natural gas customers with financial assistance for bills and deposits. The program began in 2004 and has provided nearly \$14.5 million to 35,216 customers in those three years. Qualifying customers are eligible to receive up to \$450 in annual energy assistance.

"Winter Warmth provides funds for customers who have experienced economic hardship this winter," said Colleen Reilly, Director of Communications and Public Affairs for NIPSCO. "Unfortunately, we have had more customers applying for assistance this winter, and the funds are dwindling rapidly."

For this winter heating season, \$5.4 million was available through the Winter Warmth program to assist residents across northern Indiana with their heating bills. The budget for the Winter Warmth program was increased this year while eligibility guidelines expanded, making more customers eligible to receive help.

"We realize this is a frustrating situation. Our goal is to keep our customers connected, and we work through this program and our policy of flexible payment arrangements to keep natural gas service on," said Reilly. "Funding for assistance is limited, so we are urging our customers who have received disconnect notices to apply for credit arrangements to help pay their bills."

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WINTER WARMTH FUNDING STATUS

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Before a customer's service is disconnected, they are notified well in advance in order to provide an ample amount of time to make payment arrangements. Throughout the process, information is provided about where the customer can turn to for assistance. The process begins with a late payment notice, followed by a disconnect notice with a scheduled date for the disconnection. Finally, a phone call is made to the number provided by the customer, reminding them of the impending disconnection of service and urging them to contact NIPSCO.

About the Winter Warmth Program

Customers whose household income is up to 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines are eligible for Winter Warmth. Once the customer has received a disconnection notice, they can apply for funds at participating Winter Warmth agencies. Winter Warmth also has a hardship component for families who fall outside the income guidelines, but are facing a hardship situation caused by job loss, health issues or other extreme circumstances. The Winter Warmth agency has the authority to determine whether or not circumstances qualify as a hardship situation.

Editor's Note: A list of Winter Warmth agencies are attached.

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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