

LOW INCOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

In California, many residential structures built prior to 1980 were not required to meet building energy performance standards. Many older homes have little, if any, insulation, single pane windows, and aging heating and cooling equipment. Older appliances and incandescent lighting also contribute to greater electricity use. In short, the energy consumption characteristics for many of the 5.5 million residential units built prior to 1980 can make households with fixed incomes financially vulnerable to sudden rate increases.

Low income and senior populations were especially hard hit by the California Public Utilities Commission's rate hikes in March 2001. During the California Energy Crisis, the rate hikes, the largest in the State's history, increased bills by as much as 42 percent for some Southern California Edison customers and by 46 percent for some Pacific gas and Electric customers.¹ The California energy crisis literally forces older people to make life-threatening choices. Many may have to decide between purchasing vital prescriptions and paying their rent, mortgage, food and utility bills.

The purpose of this fact sheet is to provide information on program available to homeowners and renters that can assist in reducing household energy costs.

Utility Programs

Investor and municipally owned utilities in California provide numerous programs that provide energy assistance, direct installation of weatherization measures, and rebates for the purchase of energy efficient products and materials.

To best resource for information on these programs is on the utility web sites shown below:

- Pacific Gas and Electric Company:
www.pge.com/res/financial_assistance/
- Sacramento Municipal Utility District:
www.smud.org/residential/index.html
- Southern California Edison,
www.sce.com/RebatesandSavings/LowIncome/
- Southern California Gas, www.socalgas.com/residential/assistance/
- San Diego Gas & Electric,
www.sdge.com/residential/assistance_services.shtml

¹ Nancy Vogel and Tim Reiterman, "The California energy crisis: PUC approves largest rate increase in history," Los Angeles Times, March 28, 2001.

Utility Energy Assistance and Energy Efficiency Programs

(1) CARE (California Alternate Rates for Energy) –

Investor-owner utilities and several municipal utility companies in California provide discount programs for low-income households and housing facilities. CARE provides a 20 percent discount on monthly bills for households meeting income eligibility requirements.

General Program Requirements

For individually metered properties	For sub-metered properties
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The utility bill must be in your name 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The utility bill from your landlord must be in your name
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You must live at the address where the discount will be received for more than half of the year 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You may not share an energy meter(s) with another home 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ You may not be claimed as a dependent on another person's tax return other than your spouse 	

Utility companies may request verification of your income. If the information isn't received within 90 days, the CARE discount will be removed and you may be re-billed at the non-discounted rate. Tenants must notify the utility companies if their household no longer qualifies for the CARE discount. You must re-apply for the program two years.

Contacts:

Pacific Gas and Electric Company:	866-743-2273
Sacramento Municipal Utility District:	866-675-6624
Southern California Edison:	800-447-6620
Southern California Gas:	800-427-2200
San Diego Gas & Electric:	800-411-7343

(2) Family Electric Rate Assistance (FERA) –

Investor-owned utilities provide rate reduction programs for large households of three or more people with low- to middle-income. FERA allows you to save on your electric bill by charging Tier 2 rates (101 percent to 130 percent of baseline) for Tier 3 usage (131 percent to 200 percent of baseline). Electric usage exceeding Tier 4 (201 percent to 300 percent of baseline) and Tier 5 (above 300 percent) will be billed at the current rate.

Contacts:

Pacific Gas and Electric Company:	800-743-5000
Sacramento Municipal Utility District:	866-675-6624
Southern California Edison:	800-798-5723
Southern California Gas:	800-427-2200
San Diego Gas & Electric:	800-411-7343

(3) Community Energy Assistance Programs –

Investor-owner utilities provide a one-time energy-assistance program to help low-income customers that are unable to pay for their energy needs because of severe, uncontrollable or unplanned economic hardships. These program are administered by non-profit organizations such as the Salvation Army, United Way, or

The non-profit organization determines if customers are eligible for the program. Typically, to qualify for community emergency assistance programs an applicant's income must not exceed 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines. Generally, recipients can receive assistance only once within a 12-month period, but exceptions can be made for seniors, the physically challenged and the terminally ill.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company Service Area - Relief for Energy Assistance through Community Help (REACH) program. To apply for REACH assistance in your area, contact the Salvation Army at **800-933-9677**.

Southern California Edison Service Area - Electricity Assistance Fund (EAF) program. To apply for EAF contact Peggy Robinson of the United Way at **213-630-2126** to locate the United Way service agency in your area.

Southern California Gas Service Area - Gas Assistance Fund (GAF) program. To apply for GAF contact Peggy Robinson of the United Way at **213-630-2126** to locate the United Way service agency in your area.

San Diego Gas & Electric Service Area – Neighbor-to-Neighbor program. To apply for the Neighbor to Neighbor call **800-411-7343** for a referral to a community agency.

(4) Low Income Energy Efficiency Partnership Programs –

Investor owned utilities provide a no-cost weatherization program for income eligible households. The incomes of all residents in your home must be 175 percent of federal poverty guidelines as standard program participants and 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines as seniors over 60 and/or disabled customers.

Qualified, pre-screened contractors make weatherization repairs and improvements to your home. By making a few improvements—adding weather-stripping around doors, insulating attics and repairing furnaces—low-income customers can achieve significant savings and increase the comfort of their homes. Contractors also can also teach you how to lower your overall energy costs and consumption.

Pacific Gas and Electric Company
Energy Partners Program:

800-933-9555

Southern California Edison
Energy Management Assistance Program:

800-736-4777

Southern California Gas
Direct Assistance Program:

800-331-7593

San Diego Gas & Electric
Energy Team Program:

800-411-7343

(5) PGE Community Partnership Programs:

In California, investor owned utility companies have joined forces with several cities and counties to deliver energy-efficiency programs to even more customers. These collaborative programs are designed to enhance the local governments' economic redevelopment efforts by delivering energy-efficiency programs to residents and business owners that have been especially difficult to reach through traditional energy-efficiency programs.

By using existing energy-efficiency programs and the local governments' communication channels, the two entities strive to help residents and business owners save money on energy bills through various services. This includes direct installation of energy-efficient equipment, energy audits, energy-efficiency seminars, special financial incentives on energy-efficient equipment and more. The following programs are available:

Northern California Service Area:

- [Bakersfield/Kern County Energy Watch](#)
- [East Bay Energy Partnership](#)
- [El Dorado Energy Partnership](#)
- [Fresno Energy Savings Alliance](#)
- [San Francisco Peak Energy Program](#)
- [Silicon Valley Energy Program](#)
- [Stockton Smart Energy Program](#)

Southern California Service Area:

- [UC/CSU/IOU Energy Efficiency Program](#)
- [South Bay Cities Council of Governments \(SBEERC\) Energy Efficiency Resource Center](#)
- [Los Angeles County Internal Services Department, Southern California Edison, and Southern California Gas Company](#)
- [Community Energy Partnership Program](#)
- [Ventura County Regional Energy Alliance](#)
- [Local City of Pomona Program](#)
- [Bakersfield and Kern County Energy Watch](#)

Federal Energy Assistance Programs

Two federal programs help income-qualified households with their home heating and cooling bills. They are programs are the **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program** (LIHEAP) and the **Weatherization Assistance Program** (WAP). In California, the California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) administer these programs. Services are delivered by county community services agencies.

(1) Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) –

The Home Energy Assistance Program provides assists income-qualified households pay their utility bills. If you're on a limited income and much of your money goes to paying to stay warm in the winter or to keep cool in the summer, you may be eligible for LIHEAP. The amount a state pays depends on a number of factors including household income, the number of residents in the household, the type of fuel used and the total fuel cost. The households with the lowest income and the highest fuel bills generally get priority. Priority also is given to households with people 60 and older, disabled residents or children, especially young children. Within priority groups, grants are given on a first-come basis.

You may call **(866) 675-6623** for information on the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program or access the CSD website: www.csd.ca.gov/LIHEAP.html.

This web site provides contact information on designated county service providers.

(2) Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) –

The weatherization program provides funding for energy audits and the direct installation of energy efficiency measures. Measure may include insulation, weatherstripping, caulking or other improvements to increase energy efficiency and lower the resident's fuel bills. The program also covers the costs of repair or replacement of heating or cooling equipment to improve health and safety. This is a one-time benefit.

Program Eligibility - Income eligibility for LIHEAP and WAP programs is set as either a percentage multiple of the annual federal poverty guidelines or as a percentage of the state's median income (generally higher than the federal guidelines). The federal government sets the poverty level guidelines in March of every year. States generally cannot set the limit for eligibility lower than 100% of the poverty guidelines or raise the limit above 150%. In California, households with income up to 60% of the state median monthly income are eligible for energy assistance and weatherization programs.

Preference is given to those age 60 and older, disabled, families with young children, and low-income households with high-energy costs.

Applications - Applications for both programs are accepted year-round.

You may call **(866) 860-9249** or the access the CSD website at: <http://www.csd.ca.gov/> for information on the Weatherization Program and contact information for designated county energy service providers.