



NEWS & INFORMATION

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Take steps to help manage winter's more costly energy bills

Monthly utility bill amounts often increase this time of year in Iowa because of high heating costs associated with cold winter weather, but some simple short-term or long-term steps to manage those costs can often help many customers cope.

In the near term, taking steps to use energy wisely, in addition to budgeting, can help many people get through high-cost months. Cost savings can be achieved through energy efficiency measures like turning the thermostat down a few degrees, especially when away from home or when sleeping, if you can do so safely. A programmable thermostat can help you do so with peak efficiency and comfort. Another measure that can save money and energy is sealing air leaks around windows and doors. Also, turn off extra lights, electronic devices, or appliances that are not needed at any given time.

However, simple short-term measures may not provide enough savings for many low- or fixed-income customers, or for those with extenuating circumstances. Your local utility can provide a longer-range solution for managing utility costs by enrolling you in a level-payment or budget-billing program that will enable you to make equal monthly payments throughout the year. The utility sets a level payment amount based on your average costs for energy use and you pay the same amount each month. The monthly payment amount is adjusted from time-to-time to account for actual usage.

Customers who have difficulty paying their utility bills only during certain times of the year can quickly benefit from participating in a level payment plan. A level payment plan may be the right choice for many customers simply because it eliminates surprises on the monthly bill or makes bill planning easier for people who have other bills to pay from a limited income. Budget billing may also be beneficial for customers who have notoriously managed to pay their utility bills, but it has been difficult or they have been late paying other bills or unable to afford other necessities like food or medications.

Please contact your utility if you would like to enroll or inquire about enrollment in a level payment plan. You should be able to find the telephone number of your utility company near the top of the first page of your bill.

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