



## **Neighbor For Neighbor Heat Fund & HEAP Programs Provide Western New York Families Help with their Heating Bills**

(January 26, 2009) Williamsville, N.Y.: National Fuel today reminds its customers that getting help with this year's heating bills has never been easier. Changes to the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) will make more families than ever before eligible for as much as \$685 in initial assistance and, for those in a heating emergency situation, even more help is available; improvements to the HEAP program have made applying for help easier than ever. The Utility is also announcing that the Neighbor For Neighbor Heat Fund is open and accepting applications for assistance to qualifying western New Yorkers to receive a one-time grant of as much as \$400.

The **Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)** has two major components: Regular HEAP grants and Emergency HEAP grants. Customers can receive a Basic HEAP grant by meeting the household income eligibility requirements, whether or not they pay separately for their heat. *This year, HEAP can help more families than ever before. The income eligibility guidelines have been increased. For example, a family of four making \$45,312 is now eligible. Basic grant amounts have increased to a maximum of \$685\*.*

Emergency HEAP grants provide for additional assistance in order to avert a heat-related emergency. That may include limited funding for furnace repair/replacement. Emergency HEAP payments in amounts of either \$300 or \$350 are available to prevent termination of heating service, or to restore service that was shut off. The HEAP program offers two Emergency grants, which must be applied for separately. Customers who have already received an Emergency grant, but are still having trouble paying their bills and are faced with a pending termination of service, are encouraged to apply for a second Emergency grant. *Also, as of January 1, 2009, eligibility requirements were expanded for those in emergency situations. For example, a family of four with a gross annual income of \$56,640 can qualify for an Emergency HEAP grant of \$300 or \$350 if they lack the resources to make a payment sufficient to avoid their heating service being shut off.*

Applying for HEAP has never been easier. Customers can apply for HEAP through their county Department of Social Services (DSS) and Department of Senior Services. Also, In Erie County, a number of satellite locations are available where you can apply for a HEAP grant. Anyone who received a Basic grant last year and still lives in the same county can apply by mail for a Basic grant from this year's program. You can also apply by mail if you are the head of your household and are 60 years or older. If you live in Allegany or Steuben counties, you may be eligible to file online. New this year – customers can apply for Emergency Benefits by telephone if they already have been approved for the Basic HEAP grant.



For more information on the HEAP program and how to apply, visit [www.HEAPhelps.com](http://www.HEAPhelps.com) or call 1-877-443-2743. See the chart below for this year's income eligibility guidelines.

Household Size	2008-2009 Maximum Annual Income for Regular Benefit	2008-2009 Maximum Annual Income for Special Emergency Benefit
1	0 - \$23,556	0 - \$29,448
2	0 - \$30,804	0 - \$38,508
3	0 - \$38,064	0 - \$47,568
4	0 - \$45,312	0 - \$56,640
5	0 - \$52,560	0 - \$65,700
6	0 - \$59,808	0 - \$74,760
7	0 - \$61,164	0 - \$76,452
8	0 - \$62,520	0 - \$78,156
9	0 - \$63,888	0 - \$79,860
10	0 - \$65,244	0 - \$81,552
11	0 - \$69,600	0 - \$83,256
12	0 - \$75,000	0 - \$84,948
13	0 - \$80,400	0 - \$86,652
14	0 - \$85,800	0 - \$88,356
15	0 - \$91,200	0 - \$91,200
Each additional person	+ \$5,400	+ \$5,400

**The Neighbor For Neighbor Heat Fund**, a first-come, first-served home-heating assistance grant program is open to provide assistance to elderly and disabled western New Yorkers to pay for energy-related expenses. This fund was established by National Fuel in 1983 and has offered grants totaling more than \$4.1 million for nearly 16,000 persons.

In order to qualify for a grant from the Neighbor For Neighbor Heat Fund, an applicant must be 60 years old or older OR they or a member of their household is handicapped or has a disability that reduces the household's income OR has a certified medical emergency. Applicants must have made at least six payments to their heating bill within a 12-month period from the date of application, and monthly income and expenses will need to be verified. Applicants must reside in National Fuel's service territory, however, they are not required to be a National Fuel customer.

Eligible families or individuals in need of payment assistance are encouraged to contact The Salvation Army at (716) 883-9800, extension 230, the Chautauqua Office For the Aging at (716) 753-4471, or Catholic Charities at (716) 856-4494 to find the nearest agency and determine the necessary documentation to bring to the application interview. National Fuel does not process grant applications.



The Neighbor For Neighbor Heat Fund is administered by the Salvation Army and is sponsored by National Fuel, The Salvation Army, the Chautauqua Office For the Aging and Catholic Charities. The program is funded with generous contributions from National Fuel customers and employees, private entities, and National Fuel's shareholders.

While natural gas costs have dropped significantly in recent months, the fact remains that the marketplace price of the natural gas the Utility delivers is still higher than last year and customers are urged not to wait to pursue assistance from these programs if they are struggling with this year's heating bills. As of January 2009, overall costs for the heating season are predicted to be six to 10 percent higher than last year. Natural gas costs are passed on to customers, by law, without any mark-up or discount and, during the winter months, amount to about 80 percent of a customer's monthly bill. The Utility also offers other programs and services and referrals to other third-party assistance programs to customers who are struggling with their heating bills; to find out more, call 1-800-365-3234 between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday or visit [www.NationalFuelGas.com](http://www.NationalFuelGas.com) and look under the "For Home" section of the Web site.

National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation comprises the Utility segment of National Fuel Gas Company, a diversified energy holding company that is engaged in a number of natural gas-related activities. The Utility provides natural gas service to approximately 500,000 customers in western New York. Additional information about National Fuel and its customer services is available at [www.NationalFuelGas.com](http://www.NationalFuelGas.com) or by calling **1 (800) 365-3234**.

\*\$685 is the maximum grant amount for a Basic HEAP grant. Actual grant amount will be based on household income, energy burden and individual circumstances.