



Snohomish County
Office of the Executive
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County Executive

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Energy assistance program secures funding

Program now will be able to fully serve community needs

Snohomish County has secured and will distribute an additional \$404,000 to assist families in need of energy assistance, ending a funding crunch that began in December.

Nearly \$404,000, acquired with help from Washington's Congressional delegation, will allow the county to serve another 900 families this winter season. With the extra funds, the county's energy assistance program is expected to help as many as 5,000 families pay their heating bills this winter.

In December, county officials announced a static budget would fall short of helping families needing larger grants this season. Rising fuel costs and higher cost-of-living expenses have increasingly burdened area families.

Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon petitioned federal legislators to release emergency funding set aside for such energy programs. Together, Sens. Patty Murray and Maria Cantwell and Congressmen Rick Larsen and Jay Inslee acquired the extra money.

"We know we can always count on our federal representatives to serve us, and this time has been no different," Reardon said. "We said we needed help serving a growing populace with energy needs, and our delegates supplied us with additional funding."

State funding sources also were released to make up growing shortfalls, virtually assuring the county enough money to help its needy families this winter.

The additional money, some of which will be used for program administrative costs, brings Snohomish County's energy assistance total to more than \$2.2 million. The county will be able to serve families through April.

"It's our department's goal to serve all Snohomish County residents in need, and while that looked doubtful at one point this winter, it will happen with this extra money," said Cindy Hart, the county's acting Human Services director. "We are very appreciative of these funds because they will assure we have adequate resources to cover the most urgent energy needs the remainder of this heating season."

Qualifying households usually have income at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level. Currently, a four-person household making less than \$2,151 a month qualifies for assistance.

While there are other smaller energy assistance programs available within the area, Snohomish County's program is the largest.

For program information, call 425-388-3880.

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