



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH - GOVERNOR

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 1, 2005

Gov. Blagojevich makes cooling grants available today
Grants to assist most vulnerable Illinoisans with energy bills during the heat

CHICAGO – As the heat continues this summer in Illinois, Governor Rod R. Blagojevich today made \$10 million in cooling grants available to help protect the most vulnerable populations of Illinois including seniors, the disabled, homeless and families with small children, from the dangerous weather conditions by assisting with household energy bills.

“Extreme heat and humidity like we’ve experienced this summer can be dangerous – even deadly – for people who are sick or elderly. We want to make sure that those who are most at-risk will be safe and cool in their homes,” said Governor Blagojevich. “The additional cooling grants we’re releasing today will help those whose service has been disconnected and work to prevent further disconnections.”

Governor Blagojevich directed the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) to provide \$8 million in energy grants through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) to Illinois’ most vulnerable populations. Through the LIHEAP summer program, electricity bills payments will be made on behalf of seniors, the disabled, families with very young children, and people with medical conditions that would be aggravated by extreme heat. Just last week, after ComEd gave the state of Illinois \$2 million, HFS expanded the summer program in the ComEd service area to include all LIHEAP eligible households.

“I would urge all Illinoisans who believe they may be eligible for the LIHEAP program to apply and get assistance before the next heat wave comes through Illinois,” said Barry Maram, Director of HFS, which runs all of Illinois’ LIHEAP programs. “Grant applications are available today in areas across the state and could make a real difference as the summer continues to bring hot weather.”

LIHEAP is a state- and federally-funded energy assistance program that assists households with incomes of up to 150 percent of the federal poverty level. A single-person household can qualify with a monthly income of up to \$1,196, a two-person household up to \$1,604, and a family of four can earn up to \$2,420. Benefits will be paid directly to the household’s electric utility.

The energy grant applications will be processed through a network of 35 local administering agencies around the state. These agencies are accepting applications on a first-come, first-served basis from eligible households August 1 through August 12, or until funding for the summer program is exhausted. Also, Governor Blagojevich sent a letter to President Bush, urging him to release the remaining \$47.6 million in federal emergency funding provided in the FY 2005 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Illinois would receive approximately \$1.7 million in additional funding that would go towards the summer assistance grant program. The additional federal funding, if released by Bush, will allow this summer’s program to run longer and help more people.

Households interested in applying can get a complete listing of LIHEAP’s local administering agencies and additional information about the grant program by going to www.liheapillinois.com, or

by calling the toll-free LIHEAP information line at 1-800-252-8643 during business hours Monday through Friday.