

Press Release
STATE RELEASE 2008 NATIONAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE SURVEY
Record Number of Families Struggle to Pay Home Energy Bills

Contact: Mark Wolfe, 202-237-5199, 202-320-9046 (cell)

April 28, 2009

The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA) today released the results of its 2008 National Energy Assistance Survey (NEA). This survey documented changes in the affordability of energy bills, the need for LIHEAP, and the choices that low-income households make when faced with unaffordable energy bills.

The survey confirmed many of the families receiving LIHEAP assistance are struggling to pay their home energy bills and that without LIHEAP many more would be facing shut-off of home energy service. Among the findings of the survey:

- Record numbers of households reported sacrificing to pay their home energy bills. As compared to 2003 survey, 32% vs. 22% went without food for at least a day; 42% vs. 38% went without medical or dental care and 38% vs. 30% did not fill prescription or took less than the full dose of medicine.
- Households reported that they took actions to reduce their energy bill that could be dangerous to their health or living situation: 44% closed off part of their home; 28% kept their home at a temperature that was unsafe or unhealthy; 23% left their home for part of the day and 33% used their kitchen stove or oven to provide heat.
- Many were shut-off from power because they were unable to pay their energy bills: 47% skipped paying or paid less than their entire home energy bill; 37% received a notice or threat to disconnect or discontinue their electricity or home heating fuel; 12% had their electric or natural gas service shut off in the past year due to nonpayment; 28% were unable to use their main source of heat in the past year because their fuel was shut off, they could not pay for fuel delivery, or their heating system was broken and they could not afford to fix it; 17% were unable to use their air conditioner in the past year because their electricity was shut off.
- High energy bills contributed to the high mortgage foreclosure rate: 28% did not make their full mortgage or rent payment; 4% were evicted from their home or apartment; 4% had a foreclosure on their mortgage; 11% moved in with friends or family and 3% moved into a shelter or were homeless.
- Payday lenders played provided loans to many families to pay their energy bills: 15% received a payday loan. Of particular concern, 26% of those with children under 18 reported taking out a payday loan as compared to 8% for seniors.
- Many of the LIHEAP recipients faced significant medical and health problems in the past five years, partly as a result of high energy costs. 32% went without food for at least one day; 42% went without medical or dental care; 38% did not fill a prescription or took less than the full dose of a prescribed medication; and 24% had someone in the home become sick because the home was too cold.

The State LIHEAP directors are calling on Congress to maintain funding for LIHEAP at \$5.1 billion for FY 2010 to allow states to continue to reach out to the newly unemployed and help these families pay their home heating and cooling bills during this period of economic crisis. A copy of the survey can be downloaded from the NEADA website – www.neada.org.

End

