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For Immediate Release

Winter Utility Shutoff Moratorium Ends – Payment Plans Keep Families Connected

The winter utility shutoff moratorium is a health and safety protection for Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) eligible customers who frequently face high home energy bills that are simply not affordable. This shutoff protection is a key element in the promotion of even minimal levels of low-income energy security and works in tandem with LIHEAP.

The shutoff protection ends today.

Community Action New Mexico urges customers who were protected under the moratorium and have a past due bill to contact their utility company to negotiate a reasonable payment plan to avoid disconnection of service. Utility company's have an interest in making payment plans affordable and are required to consider a customer's ability to pay when developing payment agreements. Customers should take care to negotiate a plan that they can meet. If they need to, they should ask to speak to a customer service supervisor and if a reasonable plan still cannot be worked out they can call the Public Regulation Commission Consumer Division for help, (505) 827-6940 or (800) 663-9782.

If a customer hasn't yet received a LIHEAP benefit they can contact Human Services at (800) 283-4465 to see if they qualify for emergency assistance, and they can apply to their utility emergency assistance fund.

Most customers are interested in remaining current on their utility bills, but some have difficult financial circumstances which lead to payment trouble. Reasonable payment plans are necessary to maintain reliable household energy service for these and other vulnerable customer groups.