



National Fuel Reminds Customers Assistance is Available

(February 26, 2007) Williamsville, New York: With the cold weather months upon us, National Fuel would like to remind its customers that heating assistance is available for eligible customers who are facing difficulties in paying their energy bills.

Initiatives such as the Neighbor for Neighbor Heat Fund, New York's Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) and Pennsylvania's Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) are open and accepting applications from customers in need of energy assistance grants. National Fuel also offers additional payment assistance programs to aid those customers looking for help in managing their bills.

The **Neighbor For Neighbor Heat Fund**, established in 1983, is available to help individuals pay for heat-related expenses. Persons may qualify for a grant if they: are at least 60 years old (in New York), and 55 (in Pennsylvania); if they, or a member of their household, has a certified medical emergency or a disability; or have experienced a medical hardship that has had a negative effect on the household income. Applicants must also live within National Fuel's service territory (even if they are not a National Fuel customer).

Those in **New York** who meet the program requirements are encouraged to seek assistance from the Neighbor For Neighbor Heat Fund by applying at their local office of the **Salvation Army or Catholic Charities**. Individual grant amounts are determined by need with a maximum grant amount set at \$300 for National Fuel customers (\$150 for all other utilities). For more information on how to apply, call the Greater Buffalo Salvation Army at **(716) 883-9800** or Catholic Charities at **(716) 856-4494**.

Those in **Pennsylvania** who meet the program requirements are encouraged to seek assistance from the Neighbor For Neighbor Heat Fund. Customers should call the company or visit the Company's web site for the location to apply in their area. Individual grant amounts are determined by need with a maximum grant amount set at \$300 for National Fuel customers (\$150 for all other utilities).

HEAP is a federally funded program in **New York** that provides assistance to eligible households to pay their home heating bills. Through this program, customers may be able to receive help this heating season with home heating costs or emergency crisis situations. Customers can apply for HEAP through their county Department of Social Services and Department of Senior Services. Customers are encouraged to pursue assistance from HEAP before the program closes. For more information on HEAP grants, call National Fuel at **1 (800) 365-3234**.

LIHEAP is a federally funded program in **Pennsylvania** that provides assistance to eligible households to pay their home heating bills. Through this program, customers may be able to receive help this heating season with home heating costs. Crisis grants are available for customers experiencing emergency situations or who have received a shut-off notice. Any customer who has received a shut-off notice should apply for a crisis grant immediately. Customers can apply for LIHEAP through their County Assistance Office. Customers are encouraged to pursue assistance from LIHEAP before the program closes. For more information on LIHEAP grants, call National Fuel at **1-800-365-3234**.



National Fuel encourages all customers who experience difficulties in paying their heating bills to contact its **Customer Response Center at 1 (800) 365-3234** to find out about additional assistance that may be available to them. This assistance may include:

- **Payment Arrangements** can be made when eligible customers anticipate, or already have problems, paying their gas bills. Customers in need of assistance are encouraged to contact National Fuel as soon as possible so that our experienced representatives can work with them to determine eligibility and/or develop a payment plan.
- The **Budget Plan** helps customers manage their budgets by establishing an average monthly payment amount. Costs may be distributed over 12 months (or by the number of months a customer chooses), thereby making energy bills more predictable and manageable. The plan may be adjusted periodically to account for changes in gas prices, weather and gas usage. National Fuel reviews customers' account information quarterly to ensure the payment amount is accurate and predictable.
- **In New York, Special Protections for Elderly, Blind or Disabled Customers.** National Fuel offers special protections for customers who are 62 or older, blind or disabled, to ensure that their heat stays on in the winter. If you or anyone you know – parents, friends, neighbors – fit this description, please contact us right away so we can update our records. With this information, we'll work to ensure continuous gas service throughout the winter season, and help these customers should they need assistance or qualify for other special programs. Please note that other members of the household must be 62 or older, or 18 or younger, to qualify.
- **In Pennsylvania, the Low Income Residential Assistance (LIRA) Program** is available to help low-income payment troubled customers with their natural gas bills. LIRA makes gas bills more affordable by providing discounts based on household size and income level.

National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation is a regulated utility and is one of the subsidiaries in the National Fuel Gas Company system. The utility provides natural gas service to approximately 727,000 customers in western New York and northwestern Pennsylvania.