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Doyle, Lawton Offer Incentives for Wisconsin Residents to Save Energy, Lower Heating Bills

Also Offer Energy Assistance to Low Income Households

The Doyle Administration today announced three energy-saving incentive programs to help working families save money on their heating bills this winter, as well assistance for low-income households in paying their energy bills. The programs include a new furnace rebate program, as well a new home performance implementation bonus and rebates for energy efficient light bulbs.

"Every extra dollar that you have to spend heating your home is a dollar that isn't available to buy groceries or pay for college," Governor Doyle said. "Our families shouldn't have to make choices between basic necessities and keeping warm. The financial incentives we are offering this fall will help people throughout Wisconsin make the changes necessary to reduce the impact of high energy costs."

"As energy costs remain high, it is important for people to realize they have the ability to reduce energy consumption without sacrificing comfort or drastically altering their lifestyle. Energy efficient products and practices make decreasing energy use convenient and can result in significant savings for homeowners and businesses," said Lt. Governor Barbara Lawton.

Furnace Bounty

The new Furnace Bounty begins October 16th and offers residents a chance to upgrade their old furnace to a new energy efficient model. Households can receive a \$300 Cash-Back Reward for a limited time toward purchasing a new furnace that is 90 percent efficient or better. The reward goes up to \$450 if the new furnace has an Electrically Commutating Motor (ECM), also known as a variable-speed blower motor. Furnaces with an ECM can save between \$40-300 per year on heating bills, depending on how you use the fan. The ECM saves the most money if you run the furnace fan all the time.

The inefficient natural gas furnaces being targeted are typically at least 40 years old and have Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency, or A-F-U-E rating of 60 percent or less, meaning that only 60 percent of the energy used is being converted to heat (the other 40 percent is wasted). They are easy to identify by their size since they are typically four times larger than the standard box furnace. While a box furnace might take up six square feet of floor space in a basement, these inefficient models take up twelve square feet or more and vent out a chimney.

\$125 Rebates for Home Energy Audits

Identifying areas of the home which are not energy efficient is another first step toward lowering utility bills.

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Wisconsin's home energy audit program was started in 2001 to offer homeowners a cost effective way to reduce their energy bills, while enhancing the safety and comfort of their home. Certified consultants perform a comprehensive whole-home evaluation that includes testing for air leaks, inspection of insulation, and checking for safety issues, such as carbon monoxide. Home owners receive a report based on the consultant findings.

Residents who have not had an audit in the last five years can receive a rebate of \$75 toward the cost of having one done. Households who complete an audit and implement recommended improvements between October 1 and March 31st can receive an additional \$50 rebate. Anyone who has had an energy audit in the last five years is also eligible for the \$50 rebate, if they implement the improvements this year.

Change a Light, Change Wisconsin

Another easy step toward reducing energy consumption is as easy as changing a light bulb. The promotion encourages Wisconsin residents and businesses to use ENERGY STAR qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs – CFLs – to help make their homes and workplaces more energy efficient. To make the switch easy, the state is offering a \$2 instant Cash-Back Reward per bulb on purchases made from October 1, 2006 through November 30, 2006, or while supplies last. Qualified CFLs are being sold for as little as \$0.99 at select retail locations including ACE Hardware, Do It Best, Hardware Hank, Menards, Mills Fleet Farm, True Value Hardware and ShopKo.

CFLs use 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to ten times longer. Changing just five bulbs can save as much as \$60 a year on utility costs. There are more than 2.1 million households in Wisconsin, and if each household changed just five bulbs this season, the impact would be:

- Electric bills would be reduced by nearly 17 million dollars
- Electricity consumption would be cut by more than 224 million kilowatt-hours. That's enough to light more than 22 thousand homes for one year.
- Nearly 270 thousand tons of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide would be prevented from entering the atmosphere, the equivalent of removing the pollution from more than 36 thousand cars.
- More than 112 thousand tons of coal would not need to be burned to generate electricity

Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program

Each year, the Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) helps approximately 155,000 households that are at 150% of the federal poverty level or below. WHEAP provides both proactive and emergency energy assistance to help families pay a portion of their heating costs.

Households may receive a one-time benefit per heating season, which runs October 1st through May 15th. The amount of heating assistance benefit depends on the household's size, income and heating costs. In most cases, the benefit is paid directly to the energy supplier.

Wisconsin Weatherization

Weatherization helps homeowners and renters reduce energy use while increasing comfort in their homes. This program is operated by local community agencies. Addressing weatherization problems can: reduce home energy use, improve comfort, and make the home environment healthier.

Depending on the results of a home energy audit, homes may receive energy efficiency measures such as: insulation, sealing air leaks, heating system updates and energy saving products.

A household may be eligible for Energy Assistance and/or Weatherization if their household income is less than 150% of the federal poverty level:

***To participate in any of these programs, call 1-800-522-3014 or visit
energyhelp.wi.gov***