



MDTE Expands Qualification Criteria for Winter Shut-off Protection

February 13, 2001

Fitchburg, MA – February 13, 2001: The Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy (MDTE) last week made permanent a Fall emergency regulation expanding the definition of financial hardship contained in the MDTE's billing and termination procedures during the Winter Moratorium Period.

Customers with an annual income of less than 200% of the poverty level are now protected from shut-off of utility services during the Winter Moratorium Period. This eligibility is now the same as that for state fuel assistance under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). Before, only customers with an annual income of less than 150% of the poverty level were protected under the MDTE Winter Moratorium rules.

The MDTE held a hearing to solicit comment on the regulation prior to its decision. Unitil/Fitchburg Gas & Electric (FG&E), the only company to file comments with the MDTE, supported the proposal, noting in a January 26, 2001, letter: "The Company recognizes that rapidly increasing market fuel prices (oil & natural gas) have resulted in unprecedented increases in the cost of electricity and natural gas, which will put a significant cost burden on all its customers during the upcoming winter months. In particular, those least able to afford these increases face the greatest burden relative to their overall level of income and their ability to implement effective cost mitigation strategies."

This change continues the MDTE's efforts to ease the burden of high energy bills this winter. The Department recently extended the Winter Moratorium period to May 1, 2001. For information about all the programs to assist low-income customers, or for information about budget plans or energy conservation, customers should call Unitil/FG&E at 1-888-301-7700.

Unitil is a public utility holding company with subsidiaries providing electric service in New Hampshire and electric and gas service in Massachusetts and energy services throughout the Northeast. Its subsidiaries include Concord Electric Company, Exeter & Hampton Electric Company, Fitchburg Gas and Electric Light Company, Unitil Power Corp., Unitil Realty Corp., Unitil Service Corp. and its unregulated business unit Unitil Resources, Inc. Usource L.L.C. is a subsidiary of Unitil Resources, Inc. The Usource product line is available at www.usourceonline.com

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