

NATIONAL ENERGY ASSISTANCE DIRECTORS' ASSOCIATION
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Media Conference Call to Discuss New National Survey of How Low Income Families Are Coping with High Energy Bills

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The National Energy Assistance Directors' Association (NEADA) today released its second annual survey of the effect of rising energy costs on poor families. Among the study's findings: 32% of families in the survey sacrificed medical care, 24% failed to make a rent or mortgage payment – and 20% went without food for at least a day. Of additional concern, 44% said that they skipped paying or paid less than their home energy bill in the past year.

Funding for the study was secured by Rep. DeLauro (Conn-3) in the FY 2005 Labor, Health and Human Services and Education Appropriations Act. According to Rep. DeLauro:

With home heating oil expected to increase by as much as 31% this year and residents already facing a 71% increase over last year's natural gas costs, energy costs are going to have an even greater impact on families this year. This study reminds us of LIHEAP's importance and who these rising prices impact the most -- sadly those among us that are forced to decide between heating their homes, buying prescription drugs and skipping a meal.

Mark Wolfe, Executive Director of NEADA, added that,

The survey findings indicate the difficult choices families faced with last year's high energy bills and the even more difficult choices that they will be facing when prices are even higher this coming winter season.

Other findings included:

- 94 percent have at least one member who is elderly, disabled, a child under 18, or has a single adult living with one or more children.
- 82 percent reported an annual income at or below \$20,000, and 61 percent have annual income at or below the federal poverty level.
- households spent an average of 14 percent of their annual income on residential energy.
- 47 percent have a household member with asthma, emphysema, heart disease, or stroke
- 19 percent have a household member that uses medical equipment requiring electricity, most commonly nebulizers and oxygen machines and 47 percent of those households reported that they went without medical care due to unaffordable energy bills in the past five years
- 32 percent reported that they did not fill their prescription or took less than their full dose of a prescribed medicine due to energy bills in the past five years. This included 41 percent of households with asthma, emphysema, heart disease, or stroke
- 16 percent reported that as a result of a home that was too cold, they became ill in the past five years. This included 21 percent of households with a serious medical condition and 26 percent of households with medical equipment requiring electricity.

A copy of the report abstract, executive summary and complete report be downloaded on the NEADA website – www.neada.org