

## **PAYMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS AVAILABLE FOR CUSTOMERS OF FIRSTENERGY COMPANIES IN OHIO**

Akron, OH – With the arrival of winter, FirstEnergy Corp.’s (NYSE: FE) Ohio electric utility operating companies – Ohio Edison, The Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company and Toledo Edison – are reminding customers that numerous payment programs are available to provide assistance during the winter heating season.

“We know that some of our 2.1 million customers in Ohio have trouble paying their bills sometime, including their electric bill,” said James M. Murray, president, Ohio Operations, for FirstEnergy. “Rather than accumulate a large unpaid balance, we ask customers who are falling behind to contact us as soon as possible to find out what payment assistance programs are available and how they can apply.”

Some of the available payment assistance programs include:

- Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP) – A program that helps qualifying customers with household incomes at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level. Customers in this program pay only a percentage of their household income and, as long as they continue to qualify for the program and make the required payments, their electric service is maintained.
- Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) – A federally funded grant program designed to help low-income customers meet the cost of home heating by providing a one-time payment during the winter heating season. HEAP is administered by the Ohio Department of Development through a network of local community action agencies.
- Project Reach/Community Outreach Opportunity Program/Neighbors Helping Neighbors – These emergency hardship programs are designed to help residential customers who have suffered a recent financial hardship and need temporary help in paying their electric bill. Programs are administered by the Salvation Army and funded by the companies and their customers and employees.

- Winter Reconnect Program – During the winter months, customers who have been disconnected or advised of disconnection can make a one-time payment of \$175 to restore electric service, regardless of the balance owed. As part of the program, a payment plan for any past-due amount must be established.
- Extended Payment Plans – For customers who have accumulated past-due balances that could trigger disconnection, an extended payment plan can be arranged by dividing the overdue balance into equal payments over a set period of time. Each month, a customer pays their current amount plus the extended payment installment amount until the past due balance is zero.
- One-Third Payment Plan – During the winter months, customers may elect to participate in the One-Third Payment Plan. This plan requires payment of one-third of the balance due each month (arrearages plus current bill).

In addition to the payment options, FirstEnergy also offers Third Party Notification, a program for a relative, friend, clergy or social service agency to be notified along with the customer if electric service is about to be disconnected. The third party is not obligated to pay overdue bills, but can help make payment arrangements for the customer who might have difficulty paying their bill.

And, if a loss of electric service would be especially dangerous to the health of a permanent member of a customer's household, disconnection because of overdue bills can be delayed up to 30 days under the Medical Certification program. A health care professional must complete a Medical Certification Form describing the resident's medical condition and it must be submitted to the company in order for the customer to be considered for this program.

Customers with questions about payment assistance plans can call toll-free customer service numbers for their electric company:

- Ohio Edison – 1-800-633-4766
- The Illuminating Company – 1-800-589-3101
- Toledo Edison – 1-800-447-3333

FirstEnergy is a diversified energy company headquartered in Akron, Ohio. Its subsidiaries and affiliates are involved in the generation, transmission and distribution of electricity, as well as energy management and other energy-related services. Its seven electric utility operating companies comprise the nation's fifth largest investor-owned electric system, based on 4.5 million customers served within a 36,100-square-mile area of Ohio, Pennsylvania and New Jersey; and its generation subsidiaries control more than 14,000 megawatts of capacity.

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