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IUB seeks utilities proposals to recover costs, lessen customer bill impact from polar vortex

Utilities to file plans for IUB review

(Des Moines) — The Iowa Utilities Board met with Iowa’s rate-regulated utilities today to discuss possible actions that can be taken to reduce the impact of increased natural gas and electric costs on customers as a result of February’s severe weather.

The utilities presented information on recovery costs, a proposed time period for recovery, and whether they will seek waivers of any IUB rules. Although the IUB does not regulate the rates of Iowa’s rural electric cooperatives or municipal utilities, the Iowa Association of Electric Cooperatives and the Iowa Association of Municipal Utilities were also in attendance and discussed what their members are facing.

The IUB discussed with each utility what actions they are taking to review the utility’s natural gas and electric purchasing procedures and practices to determine if there are actions they can take to reduce the impact of the polar vortex events from occurring in the future. The IUB also discussed what actions the utilities took during the extreme cold weather to ensure customers had electric and natural gas service and what the utilities have discovered about the effect of national policies on their actions.

The IUB is requiring each rate-regulated utility to file a plan for recovery cost that will be reviewed and approved by the IUB. The utilities are seeking IUB approval in time to begin collection in their April rates.

Utilities’ responses to high bill increases will be communicated to customers by their provider(s). The IUB recommends reaching out directly to your utility provider for up-to-date information.

As a result of the polar vortex events, inquiries have been opened by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission and the North American Electric Reliability Council, the regional transmission organizations, Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc., and the Southwest Power Pool. The IUB is participating in discussions with the regional transmission organizations and is monitoring the federal inquiries.

Customers who are struggling to pay their electric and natural gas utility bills can contact their utility provider directly to discuss specific assistance program options such as budget billing and payment plans.

Customers can also contact their local [community action agency](#) to check whether they qualify for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Also, additional assistance may be available through the Iowa Finance Authority's Rent and Utility Assistance Program that will be rolled out this spring. The [IFA website](#) has program information for review.

The Iowa Utilities Board regulates utilities to ensure that reasonably priced, reliable, environmentally responsible, and safe utility services are available to all Iowans.

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