



Press Release: National Energy Assistance Directors Association and the Center for Energy Poverty and Climate

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Summer Residential Cooling Outlook: Residential Electric Utility Expenditures Projected to Reach Record Levels Low-Income Families at Risk

Today, the National Energy Assistance Directors Association (NEADA) and the Center for Energy Poverty and Climate (CEPC) released our annual Summer Residential Cooling Outlook. We have found that consumers are going to be hit with the highest level in 12 years, possibly a record high for home cooling this summer, as the average cost of electricity is projected to reach \$784, a 6.2% increase from \$737 last year. After adjusting for inflation, the average family will see an increase of 4.2%.

Prices are rising for two reasons: the cost of electricity is rising faster than average inflation, and each summer temperatures are continuing to increase, reflecting the direct impact of climate change, which leads to prolonged periods of extreme heat and heatwaves. Other findings of our report include:

Energy price increases fall hardest on low-income households. The average energy burden for low-income households is about [8.6% of income](#), almost three times the rate for non-low-income households (3.0%). Of even more concern are findings from the most recent [Census Household Pulse Survey](#), designed to estimate the economic impact of the pandemic on families, which found the percentage of households that could not pay their energy bill for at least one month in the last year increased, from 21.4% to 25.3%.

Federal Support to Help Low Income Families is not Adequate to Cover Cooling Needs.

The dangers of extreme heat leave low-income families at heightened risk, due to lack of access to affordable summer cooling, increasing electric costs and cutbacks in funding for the federal funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) from \$6.1 billion in FY 23 to \$4.1 billion for FY 25.

According to Mark Wolfe, Executive Director of NEADA and Co-Director of CEPC, “Low-income families need access to affordable and energy-efficient home cooling to offset the rising temperatures and the need to purchase additional electricity. Without access to affordable cooling, many will be at risk of heat stroke and other health impacts associated with rising temperatures – all of which can be addressed by having access to affordable cooling.”

The Need for Summer Shut-Off Protections. During the current summer, only 26 states plus the District of Columbia will offer cooling assistance and 17 states and the District of Columbia will provide some level of protection against utilities shutting off electricity due to unpaid bills during summer months. This means that 33 states have no summer shut-off protections, and low-income families in those states could face dangerous health conditions caused by prolonged exposure to extreme heat.

Almost 20% of Very Low-Income Families have no Air Conditioning. For households who do not have access to cooling, even being inside their homes can be dangerous during periods of extreme heat. In less extreme situations, a family can ride out a hot day by opening their windows, taking a cool shower, and hoping it cools down at night. But when the heat persists for weeks, or the outside air is dangerous, opening a window will only make things worse. Prolonged exposure to extreme heat can be fatal – access to in-home cooling is a medical necessity, even as electricity prices rise.

Utility Debt Remains High. NEADA’s projected record-high summer cooling costs are coming right on top of this winter’s heating season costs, which were also higher than average. The level of utility consumer debt – the amount consumers owe their utilities – has increased from \$17.5 billion in January 2023 to \$24 billion in March 2025, and NEADA estimates that one out of six (21.2 million) of all U.S. households are behind on their energy bills. That number will only continue to rise as customers struggle with the dual burden of expensive heating and cooling seasons.

Put plainly, the situation for low-income households this summer looks dire. NEADA and CEPC are concerned that this summer could be deadly for many low-income households across the United States. For a full review of our findings, the 2025 Summer Residential Cooling Outlook can be [found on the NEADA website](#).

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