

**PROTOCOL for Assisting Individuals with CMP Electrical Bills;** based upon common scenarios that may arise surrounding CMP bill payment. Following are responses that may be appropriate to use with individuals needing assistance, as well as further questions to ask the individual:

Caller: "I cannot pay my light bill, is there a way you can help me?"

**EXPLAIN:** Generally, no one should have their power shut off. Yes, they will receive a shut off notice for non-payment, BUT if the customer calls CMP, a payment plan *should* be able to be arranged.

Electric service cannot usually be disconnected for non-payment during the winter period (November 15-April 15). In some cases, however, it can be with the permission of the Maine Public Utilities Commission. Customers who receive a disconnect notice should call CMP, so a representative can review their situation and discuss options.

Have you made a payment plan with CMP yet?

**ASK:**  
Have you applied for LIHEAP(Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program)? If you are eligible for energy assistance, you may also be eligible to get assistance with electric bills. Call Western Maine Community Action at 645-3764.

**EXPLAIN:** CMP wants to help in keeping customers' power on, and the best option is to call CMP. Customers who have a concern with their account should call CMP – CMP wants to be sure the customers know all options in order to keep their service.

If you are calling on the customer's behalf, be sure to have the customer's permission to discuss the account. With that permission, CMP will discuss: The customer's past due balance, details about the customer's arrangement and the customer's disconnect notice.

**ASK:**  
May I have permission to speak with a CMP representative about your bill? I may be able to help, but first need to speak with CMP. Call 1-800-686-4044. *This way, if we choose to help, we know that the customer is also trying and telling the truth about his or her situation.*

**EXPLAIN:** Even if they have gotten a disconnect notice, they may not be disconnected IF THEY CALL. A CMP Representative will refer customers to agencies that may be able to help. But remember, CMP can disconnect for non pay in the winter months with the permission of the Maine Public Utilities Commission.

NO LIHEAP applications are taken in May, June or July. If there is an emergency during these summer months, community members may THEN need help from churches. BUT only after they have called CMP to see what can be worked out.

The Electricity Lifeline Program **does** depend upon qualification for LIHEAP. (ELP) offers qualified low-income customers a credit on their electric bill and is based on household income and estimated electricity usage. This credit is applied to the CMP bill in one lump sum.

In a case where all else fails and the person needs help during the summertime, call Judy Frost at WMCA 645-3764: She may be able to help with a special application process to determine eligibility (for CMP purposes).

Everyone must re-apply for LIHEAP EVERY YEAR: WMCA begins taking LIHEAP applications in August.

March 15, 2010

*This protocol was created by the United Way of the Tri-Valley Area as a resource for those receiving calls requesting CMP billing assistance.*

