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## Alert of High Energy Prices for Winter 2021/2022

Marshall Municipal Utilities (MMU) is predicting that utility costs will be higher for the upcoming winter season. The utility wholesale markets are based upon supply and demand – with limited supplies, prices go up.

Demand for natural gas has been high both domestically and internationally. Additionally, gas supplies are down from last year. The market price of natural gas last winter was roughly \$2.82 per million British Thermal Unit (BTU). Current forecasts show winter prices around \$4.80 per million BTU. This gas cost increase means an average homeowner's monthly bill might double. (MMU does not supply natural gas, but wants to make residents aware.)

Electricity could also have supply and demand issues resulting in high prices and pleas for conservation. Less natural gas could be available to generate electricity. Extreme, prolonged winter weather could make the situation even worse. To maintain grid reliability, alerts for reducing electric consumption could occur if demand outpaces supply.

Heating has the biggest impact on winter utility bills for homeowners and small businesses, so try reducing this part of your consumption first. Here are some ways that homeowners can prepare for the winter season:

### Low-cost ways to save energy year-round:

- Replace the heating system's filter every three months or when dirty.
- Seal air leaks around windows and doors by replacing worn-out materials or by using weatherstripping or caulk.
- Adding insulation is one of the lowest cost energy efficiency improvements with one of the highest returns on investment. Your attic should have 16-19 inches of insulation.
- If possible, install a smart thermostat to make automatic adjustments when you are gone.

### FREE ways to save on heating bills:

- Wear layers of clothing and use extra blankets.
- Set thermostat settings at 68 degrees or as low as possible while home.
- Limit the use of natural gas fireplaces.
- Lock doors and windows for a better seal. For drafty windows, close storm windows and consider keeping window shades closed at night for extra insulation.
- Don't block heating system air vents with furniture, curtains, or rugs.
- Close fireplace dampers when not in use.
- Roll up a towel to put at the bottom of a leaky door to keep drafts at bay.

To help assist MMU Customers with paying their utility bills, MMU is participating in the following programs:

**SAFHR (State Assistance for Housing Relief):** MMU is currently participating in the SAFHR program that was funded out of the COVID-19 Economic Relief bill signed on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This program will provide rent and utility assistance, which includes Electric, Water, Wastewater, Trash and Fuel (propane, wood, etc.) for Missouri residents who have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and have a household income at or below 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI) established by HUD.

On April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 the SAFHR program was open to the entire state of Missouri. Financial assistance will include up to 12 months of rent and utility assistance. The utility payments will be made directly to MMU for all eligible participants. MMU customers can visit [www.mohousingresources.com](http://www.mohousingresources.com) to see if they are eligible and to apply.

**Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP):** MMU is participating in this program administered by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and funded by the Administration of Children and Families. The program will provide up to \$750 for water and wastewater disconnection fees, customers who are in threat of disconnection, past due bills, and reconnection fees. LIHWAP began in Missouri on October 1, 2021 for elderly and disabled households, other households became eligible on November 1, 2021. The program will continue until the funding is spent, or through September 30, 2023. To apply for this program, customers can call Missouri Valley Community Action Agency at (660)-831-5331.