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DES Partners with Utility Providers to Distribute \$36 Million for Households in Need

Pilot Program Will Distribute Utility Assistance to Eligible Households

PHOENIX - (October 15, 2021) Governor Doug Ducey and the Arizona Department of Economic Security announced today the Department will provide a total of \$36 million to support eligible households in need of temporary utility assistance and ensure continuity of services.

“The team at the Arizona Department of Economic Security continues to find new and innovative ways to support Arizonans lifting themselves out of financial challenges,” said Governor Ducey. “The Department’s partnership with private utility companies will increase efficiency, and it is a significant benefit to individuals and families across Arizona. I’m grateful to the Department, APS, SRP, TEP, UES and Southwest Gas for their dedication to getting resources to those in need, and I look forward to the ways the new investment and partnership will help fellow Arizonans.”

Through the [Emergency Rental Assistance Program \(ERAP\)](#), the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) is partnering with Arizona Public Service (APS), Salt River Project (SRP), Tucson Electric Power (TEP), UniSource Energy Services (UES) and Southwest Gas to ensure the funding will apply directly to customer accounts once their program eligibility is confirmed. After this initial pilot, DES intends to expand this payment model to all utility providers statewide.

“Public-private partnerships like this are integral to ensuring families have access to the resources they need,” said DES Director Michael Wisehart. “With the utility companies’ collaboration, we will be able to distribute assistance to help customers keep their lights on and their accounts current. We are grateful for their partnership in supporting Arizona families.”

The utility companies will reach out to potentially eligible customers to ensure they qualify, and transmit the information to DES in order to receive a lump sum payment. Through this simple process, customers will receive critical assistance in a more streamlined and efficient manner.

"This assistance will ensure more utility customers will receive the bill support they need after experiencing financial hardship related to the pandemic," said Mike Hummel, SRP General Manager and CEO. "The widespread relief it will provide is invaluable and SRP appreciates the collaboration with Governor Ducey, the Department of Economic Security and our utility peers on this important initiative."

"Making it easier for customers to take advantage of the resources available to them is an ongoing focus for Governor Ducey, state agencies like DES, utility providers, customer advocates and our community partners," said Jeff Guldner, CEO of APS. "This collaboration helps advance that shared goal in meaningful ways for Arizonans in need."

We're excited about the potential for this partnership," said Susan Gray, President and CEO of Tucson Electric Power and UniSource Energy Services. "Leveraging our shared resources will help us achieve our common goal of ensuring federal COVID-19 relief funds are used efficiently and effectively to help those most impacted by this pandemic."

"We appreciate Governor Ducey and the Department of Economic Security for this partnership and for providing much needed relief to our customers who are impacted by the pandemic. This Utility Assistance Pilot Program is timely and vital to Arizonans as we seek to recover from this public health crisis," said John Hester, President and CEO of Southwest Gas. "Clean, affordable natural gas and other utilities are essential to everyday life and not something those who are facing financial hardship should go without."

Announcement of the utility assistance funding comes as the U.S. Energy Information Administration [reports](#) that American households will spend more money on energy this winter compared to last year. [NPR](#), [Reuters](#) and the [Wall Street Journal](#) are among the media outlets to write stories about the EIA forecast.

Utility Assistance Available Statewide

On June 16, 2021, DES [announced](#) renters statewide could apply through the DES website to receive assistance with their past due and future utility bills to help those in need. Individuals can apply for the Statewide Utility Rental Assistance Program through the ERAP portal on [our website](#). Alternatively, individuals can apply for utility assistance through their local jurisdiction as well as through their [local Community Action Agency](#).

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