ENERGY ASSISTANCE AND HOME REPAIR PROGRAMS

HOME REPAIRS AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE

Home Rehabilitation and Emergency Repairs

Home rehabilitation and repair programs assist homeowners with making necessary repairs to homes to achieve compliance with local housing standards, as well as to improve the comfort and safety of the homes’ occupants. Eligibility is based on income, number of persons in the household, home ownership and citizenship status. Programs vary by community based on the source of the funding.

The Arizona Department of Housing (ADOH) provides monies to programs administered by local governments and nonprofit organizations in rural Arizona for the rehabilitation of certain property types owned and occupied as primary residences by low income homeowners. The following property types are eligible: single-family structures; condominium units; and manufactured housing if the unit will be placed on a permanent foundation and is connected to permanent utility hook-ups, is located on land that is held in fee-simple title or long-term ground lease with a term of at least 99 years or 50 years for tribal land, and meets certain construction standards or applicable local and state codes, depending on the date of manufacture. Housing rehabilitation may include roof replacement, electrical rewiring, painting, major plumbing repairs and replacement of doors and windows. Homes approved for rehabilitation must meet Arizona’s home rehabilitation standards upon completion of work. The rehabilitation standards are intended for use in the inspection and evaluation of conditions of residential properties considered for rehabilitation, to determine whether rehabilitation is feasible for individual properties and to serve as a minimum standard for improvement when rehabilitation will take place.

ADOH also administers funds for the emergency repair of properties owned and occupied as a primary residence by low income homeowners. These funds may be used for basic
emergency repair when the housing unit has one or more hazardous conditions that threaten the health and safety of the occupants, the cost to rectify the hazardous conditions is no more than $10,000 and correction of hazardous conditions will result in a unit that is decent, safe and sanitary, including single purpose activities such as handicapped accessibility or lead-based paint removal. Emergency repair funds may also be used when the owner and housing unit are on a waiting list to receive assistance through an owner-occupied housing rehabilitation program and correction of the hazardous conditions is necessary to avoid displacement of the occupants. Examples of emergency home repairs include smaller items such as patching of the roof, addition of a wheelchair ramp or an emergency electrical repair.

**Weatherization Assistance Program**

The Arizona Department of Housing Weatherization Assistance Program (ADOH WAP) provides nonemergency energy conservation measures to reduce the electric bill and lower the amount of energy needed to heat or cool an owner-occupied home. More than 26,000 of Arizona’s low income households have been provided with weatherization assistance services since WAP’s inception in 1977. Arizona’s current annual program funding allocation is approximately $1.1 million. This program may include repairing or replacing windows and doors, shading sun-exposed windows, repairing heating and cooling units, providing attic insulation or installing low-flow showerheads and other general energy and water efficiency measures. Low income homes are eligible for WAP once in a lifetime. To qualify, the home must be structurally sound; other applicant qualifications vary by location.

**Short Term Crisis Services**

The Short Term Crisis Services Program (STCS) is a state program that provides temporary assistance to low income persons who have emergency needs that cannot be met immediately by their own income and resources to help stabilize an immediate financial crisis. STCS may include emergency assistance with rent or mortgage payments to avoid eviction or foreclosure and prevent homelessness; emergency shelter; utility payments and utility deposit assistance; special needs that will help an individual secure or maintain employment; and first month’s rent or rental deposits in certain areas. Services are provided by community-based organizations, including Community Action Programs (CAPs) and homeless and domestic violence shelters. Funds for these services are provided through a number of resources, including federal, state and local government entities, and may also be provided by local charitable and faith-based organizations. According to the Joint Legislative Budget Committee, this program provided services to 1,614 households in FY 2015.

To qualify for STCS assistance, an applicant must: 1) be a resident of Arizona at the time of application; 2) have a child under the age of 18 that meets U.S. citizenship or qualified legal resident criteria; 3) meet certain crisis conditions, such as loss of income, a separation of the family that resulted from domestic violence when the applicant cannot return home to access resources, unforeseen circumstances that increase expenditures or a condition that endangers the health and safety of the household; and 4) have a total gross household income not exceeding 125 percent of the federal poverty level, or $37,975 for a household of four, although income can be slightly higher for households that include elderly or disabled individuals. Services will not be provided to an applicant who has refused employment or training for employment in the 30 days before the application or who is receiving services from the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) diversion program. Applicants must be able to explain and provide proof of the cause of the emergency need for assistance, which is limited to once per year. Individuals must apply at a local CAP office or a homeless or domestic violence shelter. Emergency payments are made by providing vouchers directly to the vendor; applicants do not receive direct cash assistance through STCS.
ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Energy assistance programs, coordinated among federal and state governments and utility companies, are available to help low income households meet their energy needs. The Department of Economic Security (DES) subcontracts with community agencies to administer the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and the Utility Repair, Replacement and Deposit Program. These programs served 34,745 households with energy assistance payments in 2015.

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program

The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) is a combined heating and cooling assistance program designed to help qualified low income individuals pay their utility bills. This federal block grant program is operated by CAPs and several community-based organizations.

LIHEAP benefits can be used to pay for the current month’s electric or gas bill, a past-due bill, a utility deposit or late or reconnect fees. In some cases, assistance may be provided for water and sewer systems that are directly related to cooling systems in the summer months. LIHEAP monies may also be used for propane or wood used for home energy and for temporary emergency shelter when warranted by an energy-related crisis. If utility costs are included in an individual’s rent payment, the portion of rent attributed to utility cost may be paid with LIHEAP benefits. The amount of assistance depends on factors such as household size, gross monthly income and energy burden. The average payment provides for one month of energy assistance.

To qualify for LIHEAP assistance, a household’s total gross countable income for the past 30 days may not exceed 60% of the State Medium Income ($3,178/family of four). Priority for service is determined at the local agency level, with higher priority given to households with a higher energy burden relative to income, with children under six years of age or elderly or disabled individuals and with a greater number of members and a very low income. LIHEAP regular assistance may be received once a year; however, a LIHEAP supplemental payment may be issued if the applicant demonstrates a crisis reason and has a shut-off notice.

Home Energy Assistance Fund

In a 2004 legal settlement between the State of Arizona and El Paso Natural Gas Company and its subsidiaries, approximately $3 million was allocated for low income energy assistance programs. DES entered into a contract with the Arizona Community Action Association (ACAA) in December 2006 to administer the funds and implement the program. In addition to the seed money, program funds are obtained from private donations and utility companies participating in the fund. The monies are used exclusively for utility payments on behalf of households at or below $46,100 for a family of four. For eligible applicants, the fund provides assistance for the total amount of the bill, not to exceed $500. According to ACAA, as financial support grows, the program will expand “to help individuals and families develop assets and become more economically stable.”

Utility Company Programs

Most utility companies provide services to customers who are having financial difficulties, such as payment plans, credit counselors or customer advocates to assist with billing problems, although some companies require the customer to demonstrate a hardship in order to qualify. Utility companies also work with social service and government agencies that provide programs to help low income customers with utility bills. For example, most of the state's major utilities offer monthly rate discounts to customers who have a combined yearly household income at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level, or $36,375 for a family of four. The specifics of the programs vary by utility; however, most offer a declining block discount structure, with the customer receiving a smaller percentage discount as the monthly usage increases.
In addition to the general residential discount, some utilities offer similar discounts to qualified low income customers who require the use of life sustaining medical equipment in their homes and low income senior discount rates. Also, most utility companies maintain a list of those customers with life threatening medical conditions requiring the use of lifesaving electrical equipment. Special provisions may be made for these people, such as advance notification of power outages. To be included on a list, the customer must provide the utility company with documentation of his or her condition by a licensed physician.

Finally, most utilities in Arizona allow customers to donate money, which provides a one-time payment to assist individuals and families who are either facing emergencies, unexpected financial situations or who meet certain age and income requirements. The Salvation Army selects the recipients and disburses the monies for the donation programs.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

• Arizona Community Action Association
  To see if you qualify, contact your area agency
  http://www.azcaa.org

• Arizona Department of Economic Security, STCS, LIHEAP, URRD
  http://www.azdes.gov

• Arizona Department of Commerce, WAP
  http://www.azcommerce.com/

• Arizona Department of Housing, Home Rehabilitation and Emergency Repairs
  http://www.housingaz.com/

• U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, LIHEAP Clearinghouse
  http://www.liheap.ncat.org

• Arizona Public Service
  http://www.aps.com/

• Salt River Project
  http://www.srpnet.com/

• Southwest Gas Corporation
  http://www.swgas.com/

• Tucson Electric Power Company
  http://www.tucsonelectric.com/

• Unisource Energy Services
  http://uesaz.com/