

But aid is limited

Heat bills drive some to welfare office

By Mike Eliasohn

A mild winter notwithstanding, the high cost of heating fuel has driven some persons to a place they have never been before -- the welfare office.

The number of persons who have applied for emergency assistance to help pay heating bills, not all of whom are on welfare, has taken a sharp turn upward, according to Onalee Detwiler, director of the Tuscola County Department of Social Services.

In December, 97 persons applied for assistance under the department's emergency needs program, which is funded by the state and federal governments.

The program covers all

emergencies, including utility shutoffs, food, shelter, etc.

No breakdown is made, but Mrs. Detwiler said the majority of those applying needed the money to pay heating bills. Of the 97 who applied, 65 requests were approved and four were withdrawn by the applicants.

Those numbers compared to only two who applied and whose requests were approved in December, 1978. Persons applying for emergency needs assistance don't have to be on welfare.

Eligibility is based on income and property owned. Amount of the grant depends on the need. A homeowner behind on paying fuel oil bills, for instance, would

receive the minimum amount of money necessary in order to get his supplier to resume deliveries.

Persons presently receiving public assistance do get some money to pay heating bills, but it is nowhere enough to pay the total cost.

For a four-person household receiving Aid to Dependent Children, according to Assistance Payments Supervisor Tom Dillon, the family gets \$292 a month for personal needs (food, clothing, etc.) \$145 for shelter, \$27 for utilities and \$52 to pay for heat. If that isn't enough, they must borrow from their other accounts.

If that still isn't enough, they can apply for an emergency needs allocation.

The emergency needs program is only one of several government programs to help low-income persons cope with the high cost of keeping warm. None, however, pay much, compared to the total fuel bill for the winter for most homes.

One of the programs is home weatherization, described in the above story.

PERSONS RECEIVING ADC or general assistance will receive a one-time only payment later this month from state DSS, the money coming from the Federal Energy Assistance Program (FEAP).

Those who pay heating bills indirectly, such as

through their rent, will receive a payment of \$180 if they have fuel oil heat and \$135 if the heating source is natural gas or any other type of fuel.

Those who pay their heating bills directly will receive the same amount, depending on type of heating fuel used, in the form of an "energy certificate," which lists the recipient's name, address and case number.

The recipient will then pay his fuel dealer or utility with the certificate, who then returns the certificate to the DSS for payment.

PERSONS WHO RECEIVE federal Supplemental Security Income recently received a special energy check for \$177 to help pay heating bills. The only ones not receiving the checks will be SSI recipients living in institutions, such as nursing homes. Payments were mailed to those living in foster homes. (Persons on SSI who also receive public assistance will get the SSI special checks but not the ones from the FEAP.)

The SSI program is administered by the Social Security Administration. SSI recipients are blind, disabled or 65 and over who qualify for other reasons. There were 999 such beneficiaries in Tuscola county, 604 in Huron and 574 in Sanilac as of December,

1978, the latest month for which statistics are available.

THE FINAL FEDERAL program is the Energy Crisis Assistance Program (ECAP), administered in the upper Thumb by the Human Development Commission in Caro.

According to its administrator, Judy Murphy, the program is designed to fill in the gaps left by the other programs.

The HDC has received a grant of \$342,201, enough to serve 1,200 households, which she doesn't think will be enough. As of Friday, 314 applications had been processed, with probably 350 having applied. The program ends May 30.

To be eligible for ECAP, a family's income must be at or below 125 per cent of the poverty guideline (or the head of the household must be receiving SSI). For a non-farm family of four, 125 per cent of the poverty guideline comes to \$8,375.

The most anyone can receive is \$320, which is if the homeowner has fuel oil heat. For natural gas, the payment is \$280, plus \$40 more should he or she have some source of supplemental heat.

However, those are also the maximum amounts allowable for all federal aid combined. In other words,

any monies received through the other federal programs is deducted from the \$320 or \$280.

There is no allowance made for the size of the structure being heated. A person living in a one-room shack with a small oil heater will receive the same amount as a widow living in a 20-room house with an oil furnace.

Renters are also eligible for the program, though the

allocation formula is somewhat different.

Persons who apply for ECAP are automatically referred to the HDC weatherization program. Michigan has one state program to help persons pay heating bills, the home heating tax credit. For a family with three income tax exemptions to be eligible for instance, 1979, person income can be no more than \$8,000.

Local shooting called accident

Tuscola County Prosecutor Artis Noel, after reviewing all evidence, has officially decided a Dec. 28 shooting in Cass City in which two persons were injured was accidental.

Accordingly, the 15-year-old boy responsible won't be petitioned into juvenile court. Noel said the youth will be brought to his office to discuss the matter and will be referred to some government agency youth counselor for counseling.

Injured in the mishap were Darrell K. Grady, 15, of 4109 S. Seeger Street, who was released from Hills and

Dales General Hospital Dec. 31, and Daniel Scott, 22, of 4860 Koepfgen Road, who was taken to St. Mary's Hospital in Saginaw. As of Wednesday morning, he was reported in fair condition. The incident took place in the basement of the Grady home.

The boy responsible had loaded a shell into the 30-30 rifle and then was trying to remove it when the weapon discharged.

The bullet went through the leg of both victims, both of whom were sitting down at the time.

Weatherization program overcoming red tape blitz

The Human Development Commission's home weatherization program for low-income homeowners is slowly coming in from the cold from a blizzard of federally required paperwork.

"Some of the regulations the Department of Energy has put on us have been absolutely atrocious," said HDC Director Mary Ann Vandemark.

Because of some of those regulations, now in the process of being changed, the pace of weatherizing homes slowed, compared to what it had been when the federal program was run by the Community Services Administration (CSA).

The HDC, which serves low-income persons in Tuscola, Sanilac, Huron and Lapeer counties, had \$67,000 from July, 1976 to July, 1978, which it used to weatherize 398 homes, according to Mrs. Vandemark. That was when the program was administered by the CSA.

But Congress switched administration of the program to the Department of Energy.

From December, 1977, to the end of last month (there was some overlap in funding periods by the two agencies), the HDC had \$90,000 in DOE funds, with which it could only weatherize 224 homes. (Part of the difference is attributable to the amount that could be spent per home. When the program first started, under CSA, the maximum limit was \$250 per home. The present limit is \$1,000.)

Those figures were reflected on a national level.

According to a news release from U.S. Senator Donald Riegle, CSA spent \$219 million over three years, during which time 400,000 homes were weatherized.

Since DOE took over, it weatherized 180,000 homes, yet it had more money to spend, \$291 million.

The Michigan Democrat is backing legislation that would send the program back to the CSA.

The present weatherization guidelines allow the HDC to spend up to \$1,000 per house, of which \$560 maximum can be used for materials. HDC crews do minor repairs, if needed, and install storm windows, weatherstripping and some insulation -- generally, whatever can be done to make a home airtight with the funds available.

Those eligible for the program must own their own home and be low-income. The maximum allowable annual income for a non-farm family of four, for instance, is \$8,375. Priority is presently being given to senior citizens and the handicapped (within the low-income guidelines) and to those with fuel oil heat.

THE BASIC PROBLEM with the original DOE requirements, Mrs. Vandemark said, was that they required that 90 percent of the funds available be used for materials and that all workers be paid with federal Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) funds and/or out of the 10 percent.

The 10 percent (\$9,000 over two years) wasn't enough to

cover the cost of administering the program, including filling out the required paperwork, plus pay a supervisor for each work crew. A supervisor could be hired out of the CETA funds, but his salary was subject to the same wage restrictions as applied to the basically unskilled laborers hired to do the weatherization work.

Although CETA-paid workers were employed when the program was under CSA, there was more leeway in use of the CSA funds, so the latter could be spent to hire a supervisor.

Under the DOE, not only was there the restriction on how funds could be spent, there were also new rules and regulations and more statistics to compile.

Not all the rules were bad, Mrs. Vandemark pointed out, such as some specifications for materials used, as it had been found some service agencies had been using sub-standard materials.

She also feels that some of the DOE regulations may have been the result of Congress imposing certain requirements when it switched jurisdiction from the CSA.

"THE PAPER PROCESS still bogs us down," the HDC director said, but the situation is improving, possibly as a result of pressure coming from those in Congress who would like to give the weatherization program back to CSA. That doesn't mean everything is perfect. There is still the 13-page report form to fill out for every house that is weatherized, listing such items as the amount and cost of materials used, time spent and a computation of the energy that will be saved.

(The report is supposedly being condensed.) In turn, all those reports have to be condensed into one monthly report to send to Washington.

The DOE has loosened regulations, such as who can be hired. A big plus is that the state of Michigan is now adding supplemental funds.

For the fiscal year that started Oct. 1, the HDC has the most money it ever had for weatherization -- \$310,000 in federal funds, plus \$97,000 from the state.

A third work crew was added in December (four of five men each) and there is a supervisor for each crew. By Feb. 1, there will be five crews working and by summer, six crews, enough to weatherize 40-45 homes a month.

All in all, according to Mrs. Vandemark, "The program is starting to pick up now."

That will be good news for low-income homeowners seeking some protection from the cold and high heating fuel bills.

As of last week, there were 41 homes in the four counties served by HDC that had been evaluated as to needs, with materials on order, another 41 awaiting evaluation, plus 75 homeowners who meet eligibility requirements but were not in the top priority group.

With more and more persons signing up at HDC for the federally funded Energy Crisis Assistance Program for help to pay their fuel bills (see related story) -- most of whom are eligible to have their homes weatherized -- she projects the number on the weatherization waiting list will increase.

Scenic beauty galore in India

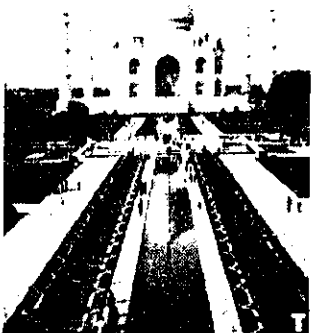
From the Himalayas, called the roof of the world, to the sunny beaches of the Indian Ocean, today's traveler in India can experience scenic beauty that encompasses both man's most magnificent structures and the world's most majestic creatures.

Sixteen days' travel in an air-conditioned motorcoach through the beautiful Indian countryside to cities of literature and legend like Bombay, Agra, Jaipur and Delhi, among others, can be a fantasy holiday for as little as \$1,600. Seven-day excursions can take you in other exciting directions.

For very little more money, you can trek to the Mount Everest Base Camp, 18,000 feet up in the Khumbu Valley. Or, with three weeks at your disposal, you might join a camel expedition across the great Indian desert of Thar. Side trips reveal ancient sandstone forts and exquisite palaces in Jodhpur, Bikaner and remote Jaisalmer.

Lovers of the wilds camp out in style in Asian game parks, where wildlife they're likely to see includes the fabulous Bengal tiger, leopards, rhinos, deer, crocodiles and over 200 species of birds.

If culture is your bent,

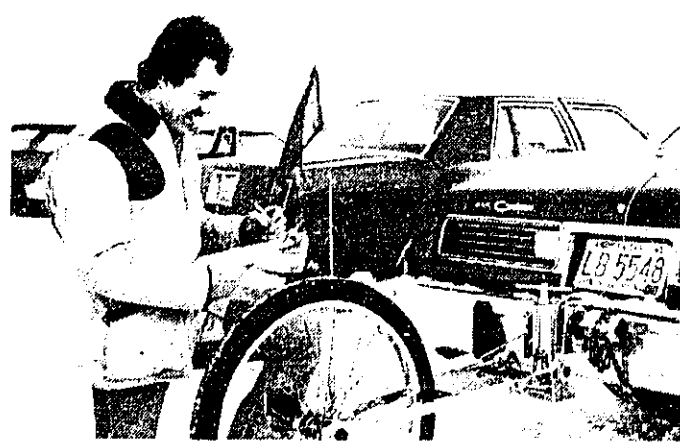


other trips delve into the performing arts, astrology and religion in India and Nepal, followed by a six-day holiday to the Vale of Kashmir. Not to be missed is the Taj Mahal, incredibly beautiful white marble mausoleum built at Agra by 17th century Shah Jahan for his beloved wife, Mumtaz Mahal.

Perhaps the most rewarding way to go is on a photographic adventure tour for those who wish to capture India's mysteries on film. Managers of such tours are expert photographers and professional instructors.

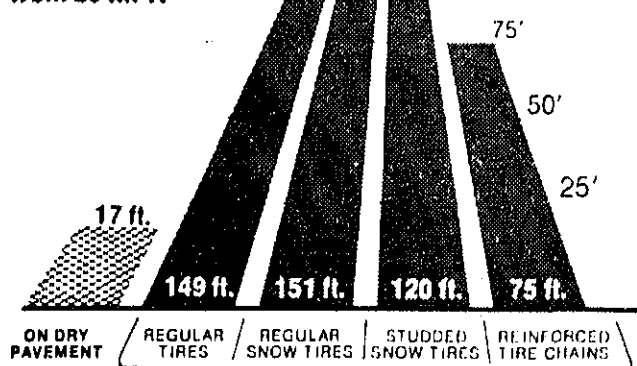
Wholesale prices of iron and steel used in farm machinery are up 10 percent from a year ago.

CAN YOU STOP IN TIME?



Test engineer records data during the National Safety Council's winter driving tests at Stevens Point, Wisconsin. The annual testing program has evaluated vehicles, tires, tire chains and other equipment under extreme weather conditions.

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Pointing up the extreme hazard of driving on glare ice, these tests show that stopping on glare ice may take as much as nine times the normal, dry pavement distance. The tests also disclose that conventional snow tires are of no help in stopping on ice, while studded tires reduce braking distance by 19%, and reinforced tire chains by 50%.

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