



NEWS

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

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State, utility company firm up agreement offering more weatherization for low income households

State housing agency sending \$280,000 to two area nonprofit organizations helping to increase energy efficiency of low income homes

(AUSTIN) — More low income customers of El Paso Electric may be in line to receive home energy efficiency improvements as the result of a recent agreement between the utility company and the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs (TDHCA). The contract will send an additional \$227,900 in utility funds to two nonprofit organizations providing weatherization assistance on TDHCA's behalf to low income households in the El Paso area, reducing their energy consumption and lowering their utility bills.

The funds will be shared between El Paso/Project BRAVO, a nonprofit agency serving El Paso County; and the Big Bend Community Action, a nonprofit organization headquartered in Marfa serving an eight-county region to the east. Under this agreement, El Paso/Project BRAVO is receiving \$182,320 while Big Bend Community Action is receiving \$45,580. The awards are distributed based on the percentage of electric service households in each nonprofit's service area.

“Providing much needed energy assistance to low income households is a key part of the Department's goal of ensuring that all Texans have an affordable, healthy place to call home,” according to Michael Gerber, TDHCA Executive Director. “The cost of heating or cooling a home significantly impacts the household's ability to afford their home. And, given Texas' weather extremes, the inability to afford utility services can rapidly become a health and safety issue for many of our most vulnerable neighbors.”

Gerber explained that these utility funds are in addition to the annual awards TDHCA makes to these organizations through its Weatherization Assistance Program, funded through grants from both the U.S. Department of Energy and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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“These funds are extremely important, as they significantly help stretch the Department’s weatherization efforts,” he said. “The Weatherization Assistance Program has a cap of \$6,885 per household. Many times that simply isn’t enough to provide all the assistance a low income household needs, so being able to ‘piggy-back’ these utility funds on top of our Weatherization Assistance Program can help bridge the gap and make a real, positive impact on a family’s health and welfare.”

El Paso/Project BRAVO and Big Bend Community Assistance will be able to utilize up to an additional \$4,000 per unit in utility funds to make the necessary home improvements. Typical weatherization measures include attic and wall insulation, weather-stripping and air sealant measures, minor home repairs, the repair or replacement of inefficient heating and cooling equipment, and other energy efficiency improvements.

The program targets households at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty guidelines, which equals an annual income of about \$25,800 for a family of four. It is administered at the local level by contract service organizations which collectively serve all 254 Texas counties. Households who have been served through TDHCA’s weatherization programs save on average \$300 each year on their utility costs.

For more information about these utility funds or the Weatherization Assistance Program, use a land-based (non-cell) telephone and call the program’s hotline at (888) 606-8889. Callers will automatically be connected to the service provider in their county.

About the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs

The Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs is Texas’ lead agency responsible for affordable housing, community services, energy assistance, and colonia housing programs. The Department annually administers more than \$400 million through for-profit, nonprofit, and local government partnerships to deliver local housing and community-based opportunities and assistance to Texans in need.