



Town Of Shrewsbury  
Home Heating Resource Booklet  
Helping Shrewsbury Residents  
Stretch Their Dollars This Winter Season!

Home  
Heating  
Safety



Home  
Heating  
Energy  
Saving  
Tips

Various Assistance Programs  
Other Dollar Saving Resources

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Dear Shrewsbury Resident:

The third edition of this booklet has been updated in the hope of educating the community on the wide variety of resources that are available to assist residents with their winter heating costs.

Although many of the services listed in this booklet have been around for years, getting information on them has sometimes proven to be difficult for the average person wanting to know what help is available.

The Home Heating Group was formed in 2008 and it was agreed that it would be beneficial for the town to have a concise summary of the existing programs available to residents.

On behalf of the Home Heating Group and the Board of Selectmen, we hope you find this information helpful and welcome your feedback.

Sincerely,

*John Lebeaux*

John Lebeaux

*Moira Miller*

Moira Miller

## **Fuel Assistance**

Most people have heard of Fuel Assistance, but don't know much about it. It is NOT just for oil, and can be used for gas, propane and electric heating bills as well.

### **What is fuel assistance?**

Fuel assistance, also known as Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), is a federally funded program which helps low-income families and individuals pay their heating bills during the winter months. Shrewsbury is served through the Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council (SMOC).

### **Who qualifies?**

Eligibility is based on gross annual household income, regardless of whether you own or rent. If you rent, you may receive fuel assistance even if your heat is included in the rent.

### **What benefits will I get?**

The amount will depend on your income, the number of people in your household, the type of fuel you use, your heating costs and how much federal funding is available for applicants. The amount is intended to offset heating expenses, not cover them in full. You may also be eligible for additional help, such as weatherization services and heating system repairs.

### **What are the program's income limits?**

Eligibility and level of benefits depend on the percentage of the household's income in relation to the federal poverty guidelines. This can be a complicated formula and sometimes the amounts are changed during the program year. Even if someone proves to be over income, one might still qualify or be eligible for other programs.

### **How do I apply?**

If you are 59 years of age or younger, contact **Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services (SYFS)** at 508-845-6932.

If you are 60 or older, contact the **Shrewsbury Council on Aging, (COA)** located at the Shrewsbury Senior Center at 508-841-8640.

Full contact information on both agencies are on page 18.

*If you have a household with mixed ages, you may contact either site, the staff members work closely together and will assist you.*





## Salvation Army's

## Good Neighbor Energy Fund

### What is this fund?

The Good Neighbor Energy Fund helps Massachusetts residents pay for winter heating fuel and other energy bills. The Fund is for people facing **short-term financial crisis** and **do not** qualify for other fuel assistance programs. It is a joint effort between the gas and electric companies and The Salvation Army.

### Who qualifies?

You may be eligible if you are in financial need and **do not** qualify for government energy assistance programs. The following requirements must be met to be eligible in addition to being a Massachusetts resident:

- You are facing a **temporary** financial crisis that makes you unable to pay your energy bills, such as job loss or an illness.
- You are **not** eligible for government energy assistance programs.
- Your household's gross income is between 200% and 275% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG), based on the last 12 months prior to the application.

### What benefits will I get?

A one time amount is given to offset heating costs. Emergency heating assistance begins after December 1st, and non-emergency heating assistance begins after January 1st. Benefits are modest and vary depending on the donations that have been collected. All funds are given directly to the vendor, not the applicant.

### How do I apply?

To apply, call the Salvation Army's Worcester Office at **508-756-7191** for more information or visit the website at: <http://www.magoodneighbor.org/assistance.html>

## **Citizens Energy Corporation (CEC)** **and Joe Kennedy Oil Program**

### **What is this program?**

Citizens Energy heat assistance programs help low-income people who cannot afford to pay their heating bills. Citizens Energy has a program for people who use heating oil and a program for people who heat with natural gas.

Each year, the amount of help Citizen's Energy Oil Heat Program can provide varies greatly. Usually the program can only run for a **limited time** until funds are exhausted. Call the number below for the latest updates:

**The Citizen's Energy Corporation can be reached at:  
1-877-JOE-4-OIL (1-877-563-4645)**

### **Who qualifies?**

Past guidelines have included the following, but are subject to change on fund availability.

- You are facing a financial hardship.
- You are **not** eligible for Fuel Assistance (LIHEAP), **OR** you have used up your LIHEAP benefits.
- You heat with oil or natural gas. (Not propane, electricity, etc.)
- You are a resident of Massachusetts.
- You have not already received financial help from Citizen Energy during this heating season.

The organization's website, **[www.citizensenergy.com](http://www.citizensenergy.com)** has helpful information on Federal home energy efficiency tax credits and other congressional links regarding Energy initiatives. Visit their website to learn more.





## Share The Warmth

### What is this program?

Every year, the Shrewsbury Electric Light Company (SELCO) asks the community for monetary donations to help residents in need maintain electric service during the winter months.

### Who qualifies for help?

Currently, SELCO does **not** take inquiries nor accept applications directly from individuals. A resident **must** be referred by one of the town's churches or human service agencies. SELCO relies on the referring agency's screening methods to determine whether the applicant is eligible. Participating agencies include:

- First Congregational Church
- Shrewsbury Council on Aging (Senior Center)
- Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services
- St. Anne's Human Services
- St. Mary's Parish

Other agencies or individuals, such as physicians or therapists, can also make a referral on behalf of the resident and can contact one of the agencies mentioned on their client's behalf.

### What benefits will I get?

Each year, SELCO's available funds vary. SELCO typically matches or exceeds funds that are donated by SELCO customers. The amount each household receives depends on how many people are in need, how much is needed and how much funding is available. SELCO works closely with the referring agencies to try to keep the program as fair as possible. At the end of the heating season, somewhere between March 1st and April 30th, credits will be applied to the applicant's electric bill.

### How do I apply?

If you are already a client of one of the agencies mentioned above, simply mention the Share the Warmth application to a staff or volunteer at the agency. If you are currently not a client, but need assistance, go to one of the agencies to get an application. A short, one page form is all that is required. Please do **not** contact or go to SELCO directly for an application. You **must** work with a referring agency.



## **NSTAR Financial Assistance Programs**

### **What programs are offered?**

NSTAR offers several different programs that work with state and federal agencies to help those customers who need assistance.

### **Discount Rate**

If you currently receive certain government means-tested benefits or qualify for fuel assistance, you might be eligible for our Discount Rate. Applications can be taken on-line by visiting [http://www.nstar.com/residential/financial\\_assistance/](http://www.nstar.com/residential/financial_assistance/) and clicking on “On Line Application”.

Please be aware that since December 2004, NSTAR is required to make customer information available to the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance to help determine and enroll the Discount Rate customers. Customers have the option to exclude their information from this list. More instructions are on the website.

### **Arrears Forgiveness Program “AFP”**

If you receive certain government means-tested benefits, or qualify for Fuel Assistance, and meet some other criteria, you may be eligible to have portions of your bill’s overdue balance forgiven. Please contact the AFP toll-free at 1-866-315-2496 to learn more.

### **65 Plus and Double Notice Protection**

This service keeps those households with all members 65 years of age or older from receiving a final notice on their electric bill, with an option to allow NSTAR to notify a relative or friend about overdue bills.

### **Payment Plans**

NSTAR works with it’s customers to help spread out the costs of high usage months over the course of the year when needed. A link on the website can help you with this arrangement.

If you do not have access to a computer, you may contact the Shrewsbury agencies listed on page 18 to help you.

For further information on these programs contact NSTAR at  
**1-800-592-2000**

## **Carbon Monoxide Awareness**

### **What is Carbon Monoxide?**

**Carbon Monoxide** is a colorless, odorless, tasteless, toxic gas. **Carbon Monoxide (CO)** is produced by the incomplete combustion of fuel: gas, oil, coal and wood used in boilers, engines, oil burners, gas fires, water heaters, solid fuel appliances and open fires.

### **Why is a problem, especially during the heating season?**

With the improved insulation of today, **CO** can accumulate quickly, especially when fuel is in use. Have an absolute reliable **CO** Detector that give both a visual and audible warning when there is a dangerous Carbon Monoxide level.

### **What are the symptoms of a CO problem?**

Since the gas is undetectable without equipment, only physical symptoms will be present and they can come on suddenly, mocking the flu. An entire family getting sick during the winter season may not cause a second thought and different members can react differently. Headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting and even convulsions can happen in a matter of hours. Pets, children, the elderly and people with respiratory or other chronic illnesses, may show symptoms first.

### **What to do if you think there is a CO Emergency:**

Act as you would if there were a fire. Call 911 immediately and get everyone out of the home. The Fire Department can check the **CO** levels while you wait to be brought to the hospital. They will also help determine how the **CO** level got elevated and can provide guidance in the steps that need to be taken so the home can be returned to safely.

A **CO** Fact Sheet is available through the Shrewsbury Fire Department. Call them at 508-841-8522, or visit their website at [www.shrewsbury-ma.gov](http://www.shrewsbury-ma.gov). Go to 'Departments' (choose Fire Department), followed by 'Public Safety', then 'Carbon Monoxide Fact Sheet'.

**You can also learn more about CO by visiting the following websites:**

<http://www.carbonmonoxidekills.com>

<http://www.epa.gov/iaq/co.html>

***Additional information about heating, carbon monoxide and fire safety can be found on the next two pages.***

## **Cold Weather and Fire Safety**

The **Shrewsbury Fire Department** wants to keep everyone safe all year long. Here are 12 important things **NOT** to do during the winter season!

### **It May Be Winter and Cold, But Whatever You Do, DO NOT:**

1. Open up your oven while you cooking to try to give your house some extra heat.
2. Try to use your grill in the winter months by bringing them in the garage or another large open space in your home. Grills can be used year round, but must always stay outside!
3. Warm up your car, snow blower or other fueled equipment in the garage, *even with the garage door open*. If your car is outside and you are warming it, make sure your tailpipe is clear. Carbon Monoxide levels can rise quickly!
4. Use your fireplace to burn trash, cardboard boxes, or Christmas trees! These items burn unevenly, may contain toxins, and increase the risk of uncontrolled fires. Use only seasoned firewood.
5. Use candles or other open flames to heat a room.
6. Use flammable liquids to start or accelerate any fire.
7. Close your damper with hot ashes in the fireplace! A closed damper will help the fire to heat up again and will force toxic carbon monoxide into your home.
8. Use space heaters to dry clothing or blankets! Air dry or use your dryer only.
9. Overload your circuits! Only use extension cords which have the necessary rating to carry an amp load when plugging in extra appliances. Space heaters should always be plugged directly into a socket.
10. Leave a space heater unattended! They can easily burn children and pets, tip over or get too hot. If you have one in your bedroom, you must turn it off once you go to bed. Make sure yours shuts off automatically if tipped over. Keep a three foot clearance around a space heater.
11. Attempt to make any repairs to your heating system yourself! Call a professional or specialist, just as you would your car.
12. Forget about your dryer! Make sure vents to the outdoors are clear of snow build up. Check your dryer, stove, furnace, and fireplace.

Please see the next page for more tips!

## **Cold Weather and Fire Safety, continued**

### **Heating:**

We are fortunate to have many types of heating to choose from, but each must be used carefully and proper ventilation is key. Please consider the following depending on what you use:

### **Fire Places and Wood Stoves:**

- Have wood stoves, fireplaces and chimneys checked and cleaned annually.
- Always have a glass or metal screen in front of an open fireplace.
- Use synthetic logs according to package instructions.

### **Portable Space Heaters**

- Purchase electrical space heaters that bear the mark of an independent testing laboratory, such as UL, ETL, CSA, etc.
- Use kerosene heaters only where permitted by law. Use the recommended grade kerosene and never use an alternative fuel. Kerosene heaters must be fueled outside.
- When using a fuel burning appliance in the bedroom, be sure there is proper ventilation to prevent a buildup of carbon monoxide.
- Avoid using electrical space heaters in bathrooms or other areas where they may come in contact with water.

### **Furnace-Heating**

- It is important that you have your furnace inspected yearly to ensure that it is in good working condition.
- Be sure all furnace controls and emergency shutoffs are in proper working condition.
- Check the flue pipe and pipe seams. Soot along or around seams may be an indicator of a leak.

When in doubt, call the **Shrewsbury Fire Department at 508-841-8522**. Their business line is staffed 24 hours a day with a knowledgeable fire fighter who will be happy to answer any questions you have or arrange for Fire Safety staff to come to your home.

This information was taken from materials from the United States Fire Administration and National Fire Protection Association. Get the full handouts and brochures, as well as other literature on fire prevention through the **Shrewsbury Fire Department**.

Call them at **508-841-8522**, or visit their website at **<http://www.shrewsbury-ma.gov>**. Click on 'Departments', 'Fire Department' and 'Public Safety' to view the list of resources.

## **Emergency Preparedness Kits:**

The most important thing to do to prepare for any emergency, whether it be a hurricane, flash flood or winter storm, is to have a **Family Disaster Supply Kit** ready. Although disasters happen all year long, when a winter storm hits, the cold weather will add to the urgency.

Regardless of what is going on outside, there is always the possibility that your own heating system may fail due to a mechanical or other problem, causing a Home Heating Emergency for you. You should have a kit ready YEAR ROUND, although the winter months are especially important.

Regardless of the cause of the Emergency, preparation is the best way to deal with the problems the emergency will cause.

For the kit, the six basics that should be stocked are:

1. Water
2. Food
3. First Aid Kit
4. Clothing and Bedding
5. Emergency Supplies
6. Special Items

A four page brochure that gives extensive checklists for each items is available on-line through the Fire Department's website under "publications". For any of the resources listed here or on the next page, if you do not have a computer, call one of the contact agencies on page 18 and materials can be printed and mailed to you. If you are elderly or disabled and need help getting a disaster kit together, help is available through the agencies.

**Also check the site: [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).** It has additional tips and suggestions for kit preparation, including family pets, and good activities to keep kids busy during an emergency.

## **Town-Wide or Large Scale Emergencies**

If you are a senior or have someone in your home with special needs, please notify the police, fire, COA, SYFS aware of your issues so that your family can be prioritized properly in the event of an large scale emergency.

The 2008 Ice Storm and October 2011 blizzard brought acute emergency awareness to most town residents who were without power, some of them for days. However, people quickly forget what to do and can be lax on preparedness. Here are some good resources.

### **Shrewsbury Emergency Management, (SEMA)**

Director: Allyn Taylor

Phone: 508-841-8422,

E-mail: [ataylor@townisp.com](mailto:ataylor@townisp.com)

Website: [www.shrewsbury.ma.gov](http://www.shrewsbury.ma.gov)

(Click Departments, then Emergency Management)

Learn about the local team who will be in charge in the event of an emergency. Watch a slide show and follow step by step to make your kit, which is explained more on the previous page. There is also information on how you will be notified if you need to evacuate. Various emergencies are covered...from all types of weather to man-made disasters, such as an oil or chemical spill.

### **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)**

[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov): Learn more about the Federal level of Emergency Management. Preparedness, nationwide emergency updates and more.

### **Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)**

[www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov): see the alphabetical list of state agencies.

### **American Red Cross: [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org)**

The Red Cross has a wealth of information available on their site, go to the first tab for Preparedness. You can also call the local Worcester chapter at 508-595-3700. (This division is separate from the Red Cross Blood Bank).

**For Seniors:** The Red Cross also has a special booklet “Disaster Preparedness For Seniors, By Seniors” available at the Senior Center. The 29 page color booklet is in large print and include easy-to-follow checklists that are ready to use.

## **Other Agency Resources:**

Besides the programs mentioned, there are other agencies out there for people to consider if they need services.

⇒**Catholic Charities:** A utility fund helps low to middle income families who are not eligible for other government programs. Benefits given vary depending on the donations Catholic Charities receives. Call 508-798-0191 for more information.

⇒**Mass Energy Consumer Alliance:** A company that is nearly 30 years old, with 11,000 members who work with 30 local, full service dealers to negotiate wholesale prices on oil. An “Oil Bank” is also available to members, as well as programs on advocacy, green electricity, Bio Heating oil and more. Call 1-800-287-3950 or visit [www.massenergy.com](http://www.massenergy.com).

⇒**Resources for Communities and People (RCAP):** Wealth of client resources and housing programs: housing and foreclosure assistance, aid for families in transition, loans for accessibility modifications and more. 508-792-5230, website: <http://rcapsolutions.org/>.

⇒**211:** This new national service run by the United Way works like “411”, and acts as a clearing house for a variety of Human Service Organizations. Simply dial “211” on your phone, or visit the website at [www.211.org](http://www.211.org).



## **Simple Energy Tips for Winter**

1. Fleece sweatshirt or knit sweater? Many synthetics, like fleece are much warmer than other fabrics, especially in socks and sleepwear.
2. Try to cut down on the use of kitchen and bathroom fans in winter. These fans cool the air and waste household heat.
3. Get some “door sweeps” for the base of exterior doors. These are usually less than \$10 at craft fairs and can also serve as cute decorations.

### **These tips and more can be found from:**

50 Ways To Cut Home Heating Bills: [www.chiff.com/a/cut-heat-bills.htm](http://www.chiff.com/a/cut-heat-bills.htm)  
Do a search on “How to Cut Heating Bills” and find many informative sites! If you don’t have a computer, the agencies listed on page 18 can get printed material for you.

## **Winter Heating Help Web Site**

The **United States Department on Energy** has helpful information at **[www.energysavers.gov](http://www.energysavers.gov)**

You'll find:

### **Consumer Information:**

- Exhaustive list of Energy Saving Tips, including a list from the US Department of Energy on saving money both at home and on the road
- Replacing an appliance? Educate yourself on the Energy Star Programs and how they help
- How to make your home more energy-efficient, including information about available energy efficiency programs, in-home services, incentives, quality installations and inspections
- The Power Saving Hours Campaign: Did you know the peak hours of energy consumption are between 4-8pm?
- Link to [www.energysavers.gov](http://www.energysavers.gov), join their Facebook page, read and contribute to their Blog, review numerous tips and guides
- Oil Delivery Tips
- How to be a smart oil heating customer
- What you should know on Heating Oil, Propane, Natural Gas and Electricity Prices

### **Energy Audits:**

- How to conduct an audit yourself: checking for air leaks, insulation, heating and cooling equipment and lighting. A breakdown is listed for each category in an easy-to-follow format for your own audit.
- What to expect from a professional audit: tips on selecting an energy auditor, how infrared cameras are used to see heat that is being lost, what to do with the information you will receive from your audit.

**Downloadable “Energy Savers Guide”** The comprehensive guide is available on-line in a PDF format that is easy to use. If you do not have a computer, one of the agencies listed on page 18 can help you or you can view the PDF at the Shrewsbury Library or Senior Center on one of the public computers.

## Money Saving Services:

There are many programs and services available to help you stretch your dollars this heating season. Call SYFS or the COA to learn more, the agencies are listed on page 18.

## Food:



**SNAP (formerly Food Stamps):** Income based program open to people of all ages. Monthly credit is given toward food in a convenient, discrete card like a debit card. Very easy application. [www.massresources.org](http://www.massresources.org)

## Medicine:

**SHINE (Serving Health Information Needs of Elders):** Free counseling assists people 60 and older with determining the best health plan that is best for them. Helps with billing issues and many other health benefit issues. Available through the COA at Senior Center.

**Senior Center:** Free wellness screenings for hearing, spinal, blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose are offered. Call the COA to learn more.

**MassMedLine:** Get free advice on how to maximize the effectiveness of your prescriptions, eliminate any duplication and learn how to use your medicines safely. A service from the MA College of Pharmacy and the Executive Office of Elder Affairs. Open to all. 1-866-633-1617.



We're offering a free review of your medications by a clinical pharmacist.

**Call toll-free: 1.866.633.1617**



**MCPHS**  
pharmacy outreach program

25 Foster Street, Worcester  
[www.massmedline.com](http://www.massmedline.com)

The complex block is a promotional graphic for MassMedLine. It features a pair of scissors icon on the left, indicating a coupon. The text is enclosed in a decorative border of small red dots. The text includes the service description, a toll-free phone number, the MCPHS logo, and the program name and address.

**St. Anne's Free Medical Clinic:** Located at 130 Boston Turnpike, the FREE Medical Clinic open to all on Tuesdays 5:30 to 8PM. Range of services include Screenings (including Dermatology on the 1st Tues of the month), consultations, pharmacy services, urgent medical care, minor surgical procedures and school physicals. To learn more, contact Dr. Clermont at his office: (508) 421-4794.

## **Money Saving Services, continued:**

**St. Anne's Thrift Shop and Food Pantry:** A great win-win solution! Find great bargains while your dollars go directly to help others through St. Anne's Human Services. Hours are: Wed. 8am-4pm, Thurs. 8am-8pm, and Fri 8am-1pm. Call 508-799-4169 for more information or visit their website at <http://stannesparish.org/human.serv.html>.

**Circuit Breaker Tax Credit:** Despite the confusing name, this tax credit exists for people who spend a certain amount of their income on utilities. Although you don't need to file actual taxes to get the credit, you must file as form to get the credit. The credit can also be retroactive for several years. AARP Tax Assistance to file and booklets on the program are available at the Senior Center.

### **Transportation:**

Save money on fuel by riding the commuter rail, the RTA or using the COA. The van is available to those 60 and older and residents who have



a disability. Call the COA for more information or the RTA: 1-508-791-WRTA (9782), website: [www.therta.com](http://www.therta.com). To access the larger transportation system, contact the MBTA as your economical resource for traveling to Boston and the surrounding areas. Call: 1-800-392-6100 or visit the website: [www.mbta.com](http://www.mbta.com).

**Small Home Repair Program:** For elders who can not arrange for simple home repairs and maintenance, the Council on Aging Outreach program works with the Ecumenical Churches to provide free labor while the senior pays for the materials. Referrals available for large jobs or cosmetic issues. See page 18 for the COA's contact information.

## Contact Agencies:

*For Shrewsbury residents and their families*

### **Shrewsbury Youth and Family Services :**

240 Maple Avenue, Phone: 508-845-6932

Jeffrey Chin, LCSW, Executive Director

jchin@townisp.com

Website: <http://www.syfs-ma.org/>

Services to residents include After School Program for Youth, Individual and Family Counseling, Case Management, Specialized Support and Therapy Groups and more.

*For residents who are 60 and older*

### **Shrewsbury Council on Aging (COA) at the Senior Center:**

98 Maple Avenue, Phone: 508-841-8640

Sharon Yager, Director:

syager@th.ci.shrewsbury.ma.us

Website: [www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/councilaging](http://www.shrewsbury-ma.gov/councilaging)

Services to residents include Nutrition Program: Meals on Wheels and Village Café on site, Paratransit Transportation volunteer opportunities, monthly Newsletter and more.

## Other Town Departments:

⇒ **Shrewsbury Building Inspector:** Most people don't realize the importance of the Building Inspector's office as a resource for heating alternatives. If you are contemplating putting in a wood stove, pellet stove or fireplace, important codes should be followed for safety and compliance. Learn more by calling 508-841-8512.

⇒ **Shrewsbury Assessor's Office:** Special tax abatements and programs are available for certain individuals based on age, disability, military status and more. Call 508-841-8501.

⇒ **Veteran's Services:** Many services are available to veterans and their families. Shrewsbury's Veteran's agent is located at the Senior Center and can be reached at 508-841-8386.

The Printing of this Resource Booklet would not be possible without the generous sponsorship of the businesses and folks below.

**Board of Selectmen**

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Re **Maria Smith**  
Net **Real Estate**



420 Boston Turnpike  
#104  
Shrewsbury, MA 01545  
Office: 508-845-9974  
Fax: 508-845-9975  
[mmsreal@aol.com](mailto:mmsreal@aol.com)

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Thank you to our sponsors!

Shrewsbury Home Heating Group  
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Shrewsbury, MA 01545