

**GENERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM**  
**Center for Employment & Economic Supports**

January 12, 2012  
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**TO:** Commissioners, TA Directors, HEAP Coordinators, CAP/TOP Directors, Staff Development Coordinators

**FROM:** Phyllis Morris, Acting Deputy Commissioner, Center for Employment and Economic Supports

**SUBJECT:** National Grid Upstate New York DSS Unit Closure on Friday, January 20, 2012

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Immediately

**CONTACT PERSON:** Temporary Assistance Bureau at 1-800-343-8859; ext. 4-9344  
HEAP Bureau at 1-800-343-8859; ext. 3-0332

This message serves to inform Social Services Districts (SSDs) that National Grid's Upstate New York DSS unit will be closed for business on Friday, January 20, 2012. This closure is due to a conversion of one of their customer information systems, which will make both the National Grid customer system and the governmental website unavailable for processing temporary assistance and HEAP transactions. Please note that this closure does not affect NYC or Long Island operations.

Because of the unavailability of the website on January 20, 2012, National Grid will suspend collections activities on Monday, January 23, 2012. This will provide additional time for social services districts to update the website with payment guarantees for households in termination status.

National Grid's Customer Contact Center, at 1-800-642-4272, will be open on January 20, 2012 for reporting emergencies, such as power outages and gas leaks. The Customer Contact Center will not be able to provide any account information on January 20, 2012.

All counties, except NYC, Nassau and Suffolk, are impacted by this closure. The closure should have minimal impact on the affected counties since National Grid's routine business practice of not terminating service on Fridays will also encompass Monday, January 23, 2012.

**Temporary Assistance (TA) Implications**

SSDs will not be able to attain any billing information, including four-month break downs, from National Grid on Friday, January 20, 2012. SSDs may resume attaining billing information from National Grid commencing Monday, January 23, 2012. SSDs must refrain from contacting National Grid on Friday, January 20, 2012 for any billing or service inquiries

TA applicants/recipients who present themselves on Friday, January 20, 2012 with a scheduled utility service termination for Monday, January 23, 2012, must receive notice (LDSS-4002) explaining that the emergency is not an immediate need since utility service terminations are suspended for Monday, January 23, 2012. SSDs must address these emergencies on Monday, January 23, 2012 to avert an immediate need situation. The SSD must explore HEAP availability first when meeting this emergency.

TA applicants/recipients presenting themselves on Friday, January 20, 2012 with utility service already terminated, have an immediate need that must be addressed on the same day, therefore the SSD must offer alternate living arrangements issuing notice (LDSS-4002) regardless of whether the applicant/recipient accepts or declines the offer of temporary housing. The SSD must explore HEAP availability first to meet this energy related immediate need.

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SSDs must use routine TA practices for utility service terminations scheduled before or after January 23, 2012.

**Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Implications**

Applications for HEAP emergency benefits for heat or heat related utility emergency benefits or for regular benefit applications for utility heating assistance scheduled for termination must be accepted and processed on January 20, 2012. However, since the SSD will not be able to obtain verification of termination status from National Grid, applications must be processed assuming the termination is valid and the SSD must obtain verification once the website becomes available on January 23, 2012.

The SSD may resume issuing payment guarantees on the National Grid website on January 23, 2012.

HEAP applicants presenting themselves on Friday, January 20, 2012 with utility service already terminated must have HEAP eligibility for both utility assistance and temporary housing determined. An emergency benefit for the provision of temporary housing, not to exceed \$500, may be provided to households meeting the eligibility criteria. Refusal of temporary housing must be noted in the case record.