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**For Immediate Release**  
November 6, 2007

## **Moratorium on Utility Disconnections for Low-Income Families Begins November 15**

**Legislative Changes to Moratorium Require Clients be Current with their Heating Bills on November 15 to Receive Protection**

*Santa Fe, NM* – The state moratorium on utility disconnections for low-income households goes into effect November 15, 2007 through March 15, 2008. “The moratorium is designed to keep low-income New Mexico households from getting their utilities turned off during the coldest months of the year,” said Katie Falls, Human Services Department Deputy Secretary.

Qualified households are those with income at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) (see chart below).

To help households prove to utility companies that they meet the qualifications of the disconnect moratorium, HSD is providing monthly notices during the heating season, for households receiving qualifying benefits from HSD. Only utility companies that are regulated by the Public Regulations Commission (PRC) must adhere to the disconnect moratorium.

Legislative changes to the moratorium made during the 2007 legislative session require households to be current with their utility bill before November 15 in order to receive the shut-off protection. “Because of this new rule we encourage families to pay their utility bill on time and apply for LIHEAP before their bills get too high and they have difficulty paying and possibly lose the moratorium protection,” said Falls.

This year’s average once-a-year LIHEAP benefit is expected to be \$137, a ten dollar increase from last year’s benefit. The benefit can be used to help pay gas, electric, or bulk fuels, such as propane, firewood or wood pellet bills. Last year, 62,269 households in New Mexico received LIHEAP benefits.

<i>Family Size</i>	<i>150% FPL - Maximum Monthly Income</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>\$1,276</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>\$1,711</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>\$2,146</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>\$2,581</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>\$3,016</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>\$3,451</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>\$3,886</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>\$4,321</b>

**For more information on LIHEAP, please call 1-800-283-4465, or visit the department’s LIHEAP website at <http://www.hsd.state.nm.us/isd/liheap.html>.**

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