



//For Immediate Release//

Cloverland Electric Connects Members with Assistance Agencies Ready to Help

DAFTER, Mich. (April 24, 2020) – Cloverland Electric Cooperative urges residential members struggling to pay their electric bill during the COVID-19 pandemic to contact local assistance agencies and work with the cooperative to make a payment plan.

The State of Michigan is **estimated to receive \$30 million** in additional assistance funding as a result of the President Trump's March 27 stimulus bill. Another economic stimulus package from the President is pending approval.

Since April 1, qualifying members of Cloverland Electric are eligible to receive State Emergency Relief (SER) which is funded through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

To serve Michigan families struggling with energy costs related to COVID-19, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) streamlined the application process for its primary energy assistance program, State Emergency Relief (SER). Changes were implemented to ensure faster processing of emergency requests and make access to benefits easier for Michigan's most vulnerable households. Updates include eliminating the shortfall determination (co-pays) and no longer requiring a phone interview. SER energy services will also no longer be limited to one payment for the remainder of the fiscal year; however, assistance caps will remain the same. Local agencies reported same-day approvals as a result of these changes. MDHHS advises members to apply for funding via MiBridges online at <https://newmibridges.michigan.gov> or by calling **1-844-464-3447**. *Note: other agencies may require residents to apply for funding with MDHHS first before they are able to assist.*

Cloverland contacted local agencies and confirmed **funding is available**. The co-op has a long-standing relationship with these agencies to assist members to expedite the application process. Although the Dafter member service center remains closed due to COVID-19 precautions, Member Services staff can assist members Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. by calling 800-562-4953. Alternatively, contact Cloverland by email at memberserv@cloverland.com or with the SmartHub mobile app.

To further advise members, Cloverland recommends the following actions:

- Do not wait until the pandemic is over to take action. **Call assistance agencies immediately** if you fall behind on your electric bill to avoid longer wait times to reach assistance agencies, longer application processing and exhaustion of available funding. Some assistance agencies may also set restrictions on funding available for each applicant. Do not assume the rules or funding parameters will remain unchanged.
- **Contact Cloverland to make a payment arrangement before you fall behind on monthly payments.** Consistently making a monthly payment towards your past due balance is better than making no payments at all. A payment plan helps prevent a large balance and avoids interruption of service once the moratorium on disconnects is lifted.



- Remember information regarding available assistance funding, shut-off policies for non-payment and government-response to the pandemic is susceptible to change at any time.
- Learn ways to reduce your bill by using less electricity. Energy efficiency practices help reduce your bill. Energy-saving tips are offered through Cloverland's Facebook page, Cloverland Connections magazine and Cloverland.com. Complete a free home energy audit online at: michigan-energy.org/audit/Cloverland.
- Payment arrangements with the co-op are also available to business accounts.

Call 2-1-1 or visit **mi211.org** to learn about agencies in your county that can assist with your electric bill. *Most agencies are closed to walk-up traffic and are only taking appointments requested by phone.* Program information and a list of local agencies can also be found at: [**cloverland.com/billing-assistance**](http://cloverland.com/billing-assistance).

Cloverland Electric Cooperative is a not-for-profit, member-owned utility located in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It serves over 43,000 homes and businesses in Chippewa, Delta, Mackinac, Luce, and Schoolcraft counties.

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