



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT of  
ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Bureau of Economic Self-Sufficiency  
Information Memorandum

IM-18-01A  
*Supersedes IM-18-01*

<b>PROGRAM(S):</b>	Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Policy on Use of Disaster Related LIHEAP for Hurricane Michael Assistance
<b>EFFECTIVE:</b>	October 25, 2018

### Purpose and Objective

This Memorandum provides guidance and response to questions discussed on the recent teleconference calls covering Hurricane Michael Response within the disaster declared counties. ***LIHEAP IM-18-01A is intended to supersede IM-18-01.***

The Hurricane Michael disaster response is a fluid situation and we appreciate your involvement and patience throughout this process as we work together to resolve issues for those affected by Michael. Clarification is provided on the topics listed below.

### Each Subrecipient must:

1. Assess the unmet needs of households within your affected service area.
2. Target the top identified needs for which your funds will be used.
3. Determine that all households receiving services are program eligible.
4. Keep track of services provided and amount per service.
5. Accurately document the client files with proof that the assistance is both energy and storm event related.
6. Pay vendors and contractors directly. Clients may not be paid or reimbursed directly, except as provided for in the Subgrant Agreement.
7. Establish a written policy for determining the conditions under which an applicant is eligible based on need for the purchase and/or repair of heating/cooling equipment. Preference should be given to households containing elderly, young children, and persons with disabilities. The written policy must be submitted to DEO for approval in order for funds to be released.
8. Ensure that all weather-related expenditures must be incurred by January 7, 2019 on eligible benefits during the period from October 7, 2018 through January 7, 2019.
9. Maintain all weather-related client documentation for special review during next on-site monitoring.
10. Continue to serve clients with regular Home Energy and Crisis benefits. The agency may not decrease the Home Energy line item to below 25% of the total allocation.

### Client Eligibility

Because of the nature of the natural disaster, many affected low-income individuals and families will not have in their possession customary documentation of their economic status to substantiate eligibility for LIHEAP supported assistance. Also, many individuals or families that may not have been eligible for assistance prior to the hurricane

due to the devastation may be eligible now. In either case, Subrecipients are encouraged to use the three possible approaches:

1. "Presumptive eligibility" determinations are based on all residents affected by Hurricane Michael.
2. Have a total household income at or below 150 percent of the federal poverty income guidelines.
3. Provide current proof of income.
4. Provide proof that the current crisis situation is directly related to the hurricane event. Prior usage, unpaid bills, and past due charges reflected prior to the Effective Date of this policy are not eligible expenses. All assistance must be energy and storm related.
5. Live in one of the 12 counties (*Bay, Calhoun, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Franklin, Jackson, Liberty, Taylor, Wakulla, Washington, Leon*); and
6. Meet all other eligibility criteria as set forth in the FY 18-19 LIHEAP Subgrant Agreement.
7. Accepting eligibility certification paperwork from another Federal or State program.
8. Payments present bill amounts may be made, with verification from utility provider.
9. Use your Alternate Billing Method for the 12 month billing history.

If individuals from an eligible household that was affected by Michael have evacuated and or temporarily moved in with another household because their original residence is not habitable (regardless of the service area of their temporary habitation), the temporarily housed household should be considered a separate household. The households are not considered to be one household (i.e. each household's eligibility should be determined only on their own original family size and income and should exclude the other family).

#### **Client Relocation**

If a client/household who was affected by the disaster wishes to relocate to another service area, the current provider may pay for transportation fees to the new service area as well as the first month's rent and setup costs (such as deposits, utility deposits, etc.) in the new service area. The client/household should then apply with the new service provider for possible further assistance.

#### **HVAC Replacement**

HVAC repair/replacement is allowable under LIHEAP. If you choose to provide HVAC services, always ensure that clients/households are served equitably by including criteria for determining what standards a household must meet to qualify for the HVAC repair/replacement in your benefit matrix or other local policy before implementation.

#### **Generator Purchase**

The purchase of generators to maintain power during and immediately after a disaster is allowable. However, we strongly recommend that safety guidance be provided along with the generators to avoid loss of life due to inappropriate operations of the generators. Additionally, subrecipients should secure a liability waiver signature from the client prior to placement of generators.

#### **Generator Safety Outreach**

Generators have hazards ranging from shock and electrocution to carbon monoxide poisoning, fire hazards, and noise and vibration hazards. Some key reminders about using generators safely include:

- When using portable generators, use them only outdoors in well ventilated areas.
- Do not use generators in garages, near doors, windows or vents. Fatal fumes from generators can build up, that neither a fan nor open doors and windows can provide enough fresh air.
- Use a battery-powered carbon monoxide detector in the area you're running a generator. Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, colorless byproduct of combustion engines that can cause illness and death. If you or others show symptoms of CO poisoning, such as dizziness, headaches, nausea, and tiredness, immediately get to fresh air and seek medical attention.
- Never add fuel to a running or hot generator. Let it cool at least 2 minutes before you add fuel. Gasoline and its vapors are extremely flammable.

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- If you do not plan to use your generator in 30 days, don't forget to stabilize the gas with fuel stabilizer.
- Gasoline and other generator fuels should be stored and transported in approved containers that are properly designed and marked for their contents, and vented.
- Keep fuel containers away from flame producing and heat generating devices (such as the generator itself, water heaters, cigarettes, lighters, and matches). Do not smoke around fuel containers.
- Never operate the generator near combustible materials.
- If you have to use extension cords, be sure they are of the grounded type and are rated for the application. Coiled cords can get extremely hot; always uncoil cords and lay them in flat open locations.
- Never plug your generator directly into your home outlet. If you are connecting a generator into your home electrical system, have a qualified electrician install a Power Transfer Switch.
- Generators produce powerful voltage - Never operate under wet conditions. Take precautions to protect your generator from exposure to inclement weather.
- Wear hearing protection (such as ear plugs or headphones) while operator a generator. Generator engines vibrate and create noise. Excessive noise and vibration could cause hearing loss and fatigue.
- Maintain your generator according to the manufacturer's maintenance schedule and read the user manual thoroughly.

**Electrical Power Cable Connection**

The cost to repair the electrical wiring necessary from the utility's service point to a home is allowable. Flooding can damage electrical systems, and inspection and repairs by a licensed electrician may be required before a home can receive power. Some income-eligible clients may not be able to receive power to their homes after it's restored because of damage. Subrecipients may hire a licensed electrician to make the necessary repairs on behalf of the client.

**Hotel Stays**

Hotel occupancy is not limited to any cumulative period, however, assistance for hotel stays cannot be issued in increments greater than 7 days and shall not exceed \$150.00 per night. The need for a renewal of such assistance must be re-evaluated every 7 days. Subrecipients are encouraged to proactively search for options that can assist in alleviating a client/household's need for housing. Ensure that clients/households are served equitably by including criteria for determining what standards a household must meet to qualify for more than 7 days of hotel assistance in accordance with your local policy and available funding.

**Benefit Limits**

Maximum of **\$2,000** in emergency energy related benefits per household for expenses incurred as a result of the storm between October 7, 2018 and January 7, 2019.

A client may not be issued a weather-related benefit solely to supplement the regular home energy and crisis benefits. The agency may not combine the benefit with regular home energy benefits and summer crisis benefits to pay a large bill. For example, a client applies for a \$1,500 past due energy bill where the usage was incurred prior to the storm. The client is eligible; however, they have no damage from the storm, just a large unpaid bill. If the crisis cannot be resolved through the regular home energy and crisis benefit, the client must be denied as per the subgrant agreement. The agency may not use the additional weather-related benefit to make up the difference. The weather-related crisis assistance is a one-time benefit. The purpose is to assure that the client maintains or restored their energy utility services. This benefit is in addition to any other LIHEAP assistance for which the client may be eligible. Payments are made to the power company in the client's name, or services are conducted by a Subrecipient contractor on behalf of the client.

**Eligible Services**

Eligible services include, but are not limited to:

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Assistance necessary to restore home power lost due to flooding, including utility deposits, late fees and reconnect fees.
Assistance necessary to house the applicant temporarily in a safe environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant must be unable to remain safely in the home until repairs needed to mitigate the unsafe conditions are completed.</li> <li>• Eligible expenses include hotel expenses and travel costs incurred to transport the client to a safe place (i.e., to a relative to stay).</li> <li>• The applicant may not have already received emergency assistance from any other program for the same type of benefit, i.e., hotel expenses, travel expenses.</li> </ul>
The following may be paid for with these funds, as needed, to install or repair heating/cooling equipment or to restore power lost due to flooding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building electrical wiring or gas line inspection.</li> <li>• Utility box replacement.</li> <li>• Contractor’s/subcontractor’s cost to repair electrical wiring or gas lines.</li> <li>• Other fees required to assure resumption of services.</li> </ul>
For purchase and/or repair of air conditioning systems or cooling equipment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equipment must meet the Underwriter Laboratory (UL) listings and local codes.</li> <li>• All equipment repair or replacement must be conducted by a licensed repairman.</li> <li>• Vouchers for purchase of cooling equipment, such as portable air conditioners are not allowed.</li> <li>• Must follow the agency’s written guidelines for eligibility.</li> <li>• Any equipment should be purchased in a manner to obtain the best possible product and price.</li> <li>• Central cooling equipment may be repaired or replaced in rental housing only with the written consent of the landlord.</li> </ul>
NOTE: These funds may <b>not</b> be used to purchase, install, or repair any <i>unvented</i> appliances.
Temporary shelter or house individuals in hotels.
Cost for transportation (i.e. cars, shuttles, buses) from crisis area to shelters.
Utility reconnection costs.
Utility Box Replacement.
Contractor cost to repair electrical wiring or gas lines.
Fees required to assure resumption of services.
Repair or replacement cost for furnaces and air conditions.
Insulation repair.
Coats and blankets, as tangible benefits to keep individuals warm.
Crisis payments for utilities and utility deposits.
Purchase and installation of fans and air conditioners.
Purchase of generators.
Fuel Assistance: For pre-paid fuel assistance such as fuel oil or propane, the agency is encouraged to purchase Enough fuel to supply the client through December 2, 2018. The loss of fuel oil or propane must be directly caused by flooding and heavy rain event. Fuel oil or propane used up under regular living conditions is not eligible for refill under this release.

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**Reporting**

Subrecipients are required to complete the monthly Disaster Services Report (**Attachment 'A'**), which needs to be submitted to your Grant Manager no later than the twenty-first day of each month. In the event the twenty-first day of the month falls on a weekend day or holiday, the Disaster Services Report shall be due the next business day.

**Inquiries**

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