

Assistance Agencies

The Office of Regulatory Staff provides consumers with the following information to offer assistance, ensure safety, and help lower costs during the winter heating season. Below is a list of community action agencies around the state offering help with heating bills:

Aiken/Barnwell Counties Community Action Commission, Inc.
Aiken, Barnwell, & Lexington counties
803-648-6836

Beaufort/Jasper Economic Opportunity Commission, Inc.
Beaufort & Jasper counties
843-470-4516

Berkeley-Dorchester Counties Economic Development Corporation
Berkeley & Dorchester counties
843-761-8244

Carolina Community Actions, Inc.
Chester, Fairfield, Lancaster, Union, & York counties
803-329-5195

Charleston County Human Services Commission
Charleston county
843-723-9285

Chesterfield-Marlboro Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.
Chesterfield & Marlboro counties
843-320-9760

Darlington County Community Action Agency
Darlington county
843-332-1135

GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission, Inc.
Abbeville, Edgefield, Greenwood, Laurens, McCormick, Newberry, & Saluda counties
864-223-8434

Lowcountry Community Action Agency, Inc.
Colleton & Hampton counties
843-549-5576

O-C-A-B Community Action Agency, Inc.
Orangeburg, Calhoun, Allendale, & Bamberg counties
803-536-1027

Pee Dee Community Action Agency
Dillon, Florence, & Marion counties
843-678-3400

Piedmont Community Actions, Inc.
Cherokee & Spartanburg counties
864-585-8183

Sunbelt Human Advancement Resources, Inc. (SHARE)
Anderson, Greenville, Oconee, & Pickens counties
864-269-0700

Waccamaw Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.
Horry, Georgetown, & Williamsburg counties
843-234-4100

Wateree Community Actions, Inc.
Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee, Richland, & Sumter counties
803-775-4354

Be Energy Safe

Consumers may want to use cheaper, alternative sources to heat their homes. However, many of these can be serious safety hazards.



- Portable space heaters should be three feet away from anything that can burn and should always be turned off when leaving the room or going to sleep.
- Wood and coal stoves, fireplaces, chimneys, chimney connectors, and all other solid-fueled heating equipment need to be checked once a year by a professional and cleaned as often as the professional says is needed.
- Portable kerosene heaters must be fueled only in a well ventilated area, free of flame and other heat sources, and only when the heater has cooled fully. Follow the manufacturer's instructions on what type of kerosene to use. Never use gasoline.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for turning a heating device on or off. When buying heaters, look for those with automatic shutoff features.
- Be sure that any gas-fueled heating device is installed in a ventilated area. Never put unvented gas space heaters in bedrooms or bathrooms.
- *In South Carolina, portable kerosene and natural gas heaters are legal for use in one- and two-family homes, but **not** in apartments or businesses.*
- LP (liquefied petroleum) gas heaters with self-contained fuel supplies are **not** allowed for home use by NFPA codes.

For more safety tips, visit the S.C. Fire Marshal's web site at www.llr.state.sc.us/firemarshal



Be Energy Smart

There are simple and low-cost actions that consumers can take to lower their heating bills. Here are a few, and more can be found on the U.S. Department of Energy's web site at www.doe.gov. Also, visit the ORS web site at www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov.



- Have your furnace and gas appliances checked once a year by a professional.
- Put on a sweater and set the thermostat between 65 and 68 degrees during the winter. (Note: avoid cooler temperatures in homes with infants or with ill or elderly persons).
- Close leaks around doors, windows, and other openings, such as pipes or ducts, with caulking or weather-stripping.
- If pipes or ducts run through unheated areas, insulate them.
- Use draperies, awnings, blinds, or shutters on all windows to slow the loss of heat. Keep window coverings open on sunny days to let the sun's warmth in and close them at night to insulate against cold, outside air.
- Avoid blocking heating registers with furniture, draperies, or carpet.
- Purchase low-cost, pre-cut insulation gaskets to keep out cold air entering your home through electrical switches and outlet plates.
- Replace or clean filters in heating units regularly.
- See if the attic, crawlspace, or basement has the suggested levels of insulation. Add as needed.

A fireplace is one of the most inefficient heat sources. It releases warm air through the chimney. Keep your fireplace damper closed unless a fire is going. If you never use your fireplace, plug and seal the chimney flue.

Questions?

The ORS Can Help

The Consumer Services Division of the Office of Regulatory Staff can help by arranging payment plans with your electric and gas utility and by directing you to social service agencies that may have available funds to assist with energy costs.

Phone 803-737-5230 (Columbia, S.C.)
1-800-922-1531 (toll-free in S.C.)
803-737-5175 TTY (Columbia, S.C.)
1-800-334-2217 TTY (toll-free in S.C.)

Fax 803-737-4750

Web www.regulatorystaff.sc.gov

Hours 8:30 a.m.—5:00 p.m.
Monday through Friday
Messages can be left on 24-hour
Consumer Services hotline
(closed state holidays)

About the ORS

The S.C. Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) was created in 2004 by the S.C. General Assembly.

The ORS represents the public interest of South Carolina in utility regulation with regard to rates, charges, service standards, facilities, and practices of the major utility industries - electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water/wastewater, and transportation - before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (PSC), the court system, the S.C. General Assembly, and federal regulatory bodies. The ORS has responsibility for oversight of railroad safety and natural gas pipeline safety in the state.

In fulfilling this mission, the ORS strives to balance the concerns of the using and consuming public, the financial integrity of public utilities, and the economic development of South Carolina.

Winter Heating Costs

A Consumer Advisory



Information for Consumers