



New Jersey Board of

Public Utilities

PRESS RELEASE

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CAN'T PAY YOUR PHONE BILL? STAY CONNECTED WITH TELEPHONE ASSISTANCE

NJBPU Promotes National Telephone Discount Lifeline Awareness Week from September 14-20, 2009

(NEWARK, NJ) – In an emergency, who can afford not to have a telephone? Staying connected to local resources and emergency services can improve and possibly save many lives, say state regulators.

Access to local emergency services and community resources is vital to our low-income and elderly residents. The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) is proud to join NJ SHARES and the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) in celebrating *National Telephone Discount Lifeline Awareness Week* from September 14-20, 2009.

Two programs provide assistance to telephone customers. "Link-Up" offers a reduction in installation fees for families who cannot afford to pay for a new phone service connection. "Lifeline" is a program for a reduction in the monthly fees for telephone service. New Jersey's enrollment in Lifeline is automatic for more than 100,000 low-income residents who are already enrolled in social service programs such as SSI, Medicaid, PAAD, LIHEAP/HEAP, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families/Work First New Jersey (TANF), Food Stamp Program and others.

"It is critical for every household to have telephone access to emergency services, even in these financially difficult times," said NJBPU President Jeanne M. Fox. "These programs help New Jersey's households maintain a link to the world through their telephone."

Under the federal Lifeline program, telephone customers who participate in or are eligible for certain public assistance programs are entitled to receive a basic telephone service discount of at least \$10 per month. Link-Up provides a 50 percent reduction in the telephone service installation charge, up to a maximum of \$30 for qualifying households that do not currently have telephone service. Currently, more than 100,000 Lifeline Customers receive a benefit, averaging \$195 per household, annually.

For eligibility and enrollment information, call NJ SHARES at 1-888 337-3339 or visit www.njshares.org.

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About the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU)

The New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (NJBPU) is a state agency and regulatory authority mandated to ensure safe, adequate, and proper utility services at reasonable rates for New Jersey customers. Critical services regulated by the NJBPU include natural gas, electricity, water, wastewater, telecommunications and cable television. The Board has general oversight responsibility for monitoring utility service, responding to consumer complaints, and investigating utility accidents. To find out more about the NJBPU, visit our web site at www.bpu.state.nj.us.

About the New Jersey Emergency Master Plan (EMP)

The New Jersey Energy Master Plan is a long-term vision for our state's energy needs through the year 2020. This broad-based planning effort brings together individuals from State Government, utilities, other energy sector firms, business groups, environmental groups, academia and private citizens -- all of whom share a commitment to effective State energy planning and policy that shapes economic, environmental and social well-being. For more information, visit the EMP website at <http://www.nj.gov/empl>.