

Be Energy Smart

As a consumer, you can take simple and inexpensive measures to lower your heating costs.

- Have a professional check your furnace and gas appliances once a year.
- Set the thermostat between 65 and 68 degrees during cooler months.
- Close leaks around doors, windows, and openings with caulking or weather stripping.
- Insulate pipes and ducts that run through unheated areas.
- Use draperies, blinds, or shutters on windows to slow loss of heat. Open coverings on sunny days to let in the warmth.
- Avoid blocking heating vents with furniture, draperies, or carpet.
- Purchase low-cost, pre-cut gaskets to insulate behind electrical switches and plates.
- Make sure to clean the air filters on your heating unit regularly.
- Ensure that attics, crawlspaces, and basements have the proper levels of insulation.
- Fireplaces can be major sources of heat loss. Close the flue when not in use. If you never use the fireplace, have the flue plugged.
- Be aware of drafts. If you can't seal them, make sure you sit away from them. This will help you feel warmer.
- Portable heaters are a very inefficient way to heat your house and can cause your energy bill to skyrocket.

More tips can be found on the US Department of Energy's website at www.DOE.GOV. Also, visit the ORS website at ORS.SC.GOV.

ABOUT THE ORS

The South Carolina Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) represents consumers of investor-owned utilities in South Carolina before the Public Service Commission of South Carolina (PSC). The PSC is the state agency that sets utilities' rates. The ORS must look at the impact to the consumer and utilities' continued investment in reliable and high-quality services.

ORS Consumer Services Can Help

If you've spoken with your utility and still need help, ORS Consumer Services can contact the company on your behalf. The ORS can check to see whether the utility has followed all applicable regulations. Staff can also direct you to social services agencies that may have available funds to assist with your utility bills.



8:30 AM - 5:00 PM

Monday - Friday (closed state holidays)
Messages can be left on 24-hour ORS Consumer Services hotline.



(803) 737-5230 (Columbia, SC)
(800) 922-1531 (toll-free in SC)



Managing Winter Heating Costs

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 at least three feet away from anything that can burn or melt 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 recommended.
- 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 fully cooled. Make sure to follow all instructions provided by the manufacturer.
- When purchasing heating devices, look for ones that have an automatic-shutoff feature. Always follow manufacturer instructions when turning heating devices on and off.
- Be sure that any gas-fueled heating device is installed in a well-ventilated area. Never put unvented gas heaters in bathrooms or bedrooms.
- In South Carolina, portable kerosene and natural gas heaters are not legal for use 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 SC State Fire Marshal's website at StateFire.LLR.SC.GOV.



Assistance Agencies

Consumers may find they need help meeting their energy needs. Some utilities support programs in local energy offices throughout the state to help consumers. The agencies listed below can help you apply for assistance.

Call 2-1-1 anytime– 24 hours a day, 365 days a year– to connect to vital services in your community. This service is free and multilingual. 2-1-1 is for finding community health and human services resources.

Aiken/Barnwell Counties Community Action Commission, Inc.

Aiken, Barnwell, and Lexington Counties
(803) 648-6836

Beaufort/Jasper Economic Opportunity Commission, Inc.

Beaufort and Jasper Counties
(843) 470-4508

Carolina Community Actions, Inc.

Chester, Fairfield, Lancaster, Union, and York Counties
(803) 329-5195

Charleston Co. Human Services Commission

Charleston County
(843) 723-9285

Chesterfield-Marlboro Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.

Chesterfield and Marlboro Counties
(843) 320-9760

Darlington County Community Action Agency

Darlington County
(843) 332-1135

GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission, Inc.

Greenwood, Laurens, Edgefield, Abbeville, McCormick, Newberry, and Saluda Counties
(864) 223-8434

Lowcountry Community Action Agency, Inc.

Colleton and Hampton Counties
(843) 549-5576

O-C-A-B Community Action Agency, Inc.

Orangeburg, Calhoun, Allendale, and Bamberg Counties
(803) 536-1027

Pee Dee Community Action Agency

Dillon, Florence, and Marion Counties
(843) 678-3400

Piedmont Community Actions, Inc.

Cherokee and Spartanburg Counties
(864) 327-4546

Sunbelt Human Advancement Resources, Inc. (SHARE)

Anderson, Greenville, Oconee, and Pickens Counties
(864) 269-0700

Waccamaw Economic Opportunity Council, Inc.

Horry, Georgetown, and Williamsburg Counties
(843) 234-4100

Wateree Community Actions, Inc.

Clarendon, Kershaw, Lee, Richland, and Sumter Counties
(803) 775-4354

American Red Cross - Central South Carolina

(803) 540-1200