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Federal stimulus money helps weatherize homes for low-income Utahns

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WEST JORDAN -- As winter weather intensifies this week, hundreds of Utahns can be content that their homes are cozier this year. Federal stimulus funds are helping to weatherize thousands of homes for low-income families.

"Participating households average nearly 33 percent in savings, or approximately \$285 per year, after the completion of weatherization improvements. - Utah Div. of Housing & Community Development"

This is a win-win-win situation: \$38 million in federal money will go to weatherize homes for families that cannot afford it, and that cuts their energy bills and reduces energy demand -- which is good for the environment. Plus, the program creates jobs.

In West Jordan Tuesday, a fresh blanket of snow did not slow weatherization crews improving the energy efficiency at an apartment complex on 7000 South. Samantha Schmidtke got a new furnace, new ductwork, a new refrigerator, new windows; and more insulation is on the way, all free.

"The air doesn't come through," Schmidtke said. "It stays warm. It doesn't get cold."

Her apartment used to be drafty and noisy. Now, it's cozy and quiet.

"When I first moved in here, the window was stuck open about two inches, so it's very quiet," She said. She's not alone, most of her neighbors, and 4,000 other Utahns, will get badly needed repairs and upgrades. Richard Frandsen, a Community Action Partnership (CAP) furnace installer, said many homes desperately need weatherization upgrades.

"I see all kinds of stuff: broken windows, doors," Frandsen said. "The house just leaks everywhere."

CAP agencies across Utah got federal stimulus money for the Weatherization Assistance Program. Qualifying families living below the poverty level get free

Did you know...

Both owner-occupied and rental units are eligible for weatherization. Services are determined following a detailed energy audit of each home. Services include:

weatherization services, and CAP can help more families than ever before.

The program started nearly 30 years ago, but this new money takes the program to a different level.

- Furnace replacement
- Insulation
- Air sealing
- Refrigerator replacement
- [Community Action Partnership of Utah](#)

"Statewide, the average was about 1,500 homes a year, and we expect to do about 4,000 statewide this year," said Laura Reilly, weatherization manager for CAP in Salt Lake City.

Those changes can improve overall energy efficiency in a home 30 to 40 percent.

"It provides the same things that a contractor can provide without the cost out-of-pocket of the homeowner, or the tenant if it's a rental unit," Reilly said.

In the 100-unit complex on 7000 South, CAP has already changed out more than a dozen furnaces, and it plans to replace more than 80. The new furnaces are about twice as efficient as the older models -- that can save families hundreds of dollars a year. "All the insulation, all the windows we do, that will tell us what size furnace we need," Frandsen said. "So, if we put the right furnace in, the longer it runs, the more efficient it is."

To find out how to get free weatherization in your community, simply call 211 to get started.

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