

SENIOR INFORMATION & ASSISTANCE

Northwest Regional Council
600 Lakeway Drive, Suite 100
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360)738-2500 or (360)380-8121

Miscellaneous Home/Property Discounts

Power/Heat

Budget Payment Plan: Puget Sound Energy, **1-888-225-5773**.

A monthly, averaged payment plan that allows customers to avoid higher bills in winter, by spreading costs throughout the year. Current balance must be paid down first.

Energy Fund: Salvation Army, **733-1410**.

A program to assist with payment of Puget Sound Energy bills for customers at risk of losing their power. **Funds generally available January-April only**. There is limited funding for those with essential medical equipment or families with infant children. Contributions to the fund are from PSE customers, company employees and stockholders.

Energy Assistance: The Opportunity Council, **255-2192 or 1-888-586-7293**.

Two programs assist with heating bills (gas, electric, propane, wood) for low-income persons during winter months. Interviews are scheduled from November through February. Homebound seniors may call Senior I&A for application assistance.

Utilities

Water/Sewer:

- **Bellingham:** Bellingham City Hall, **778-8000**. Applicants must be residents of Bellingham, have an income below \$27,350 and be receiving Social Security benefits.
- **Blaine:** Blaine City Utilities, **332-8311**. Applicants must be residents of Blaine, have an income below \$35,300 (1 person) \$40,300 (2 people) and be over 62 years of age or disabled.
- **Lynden:** Lynden City Hall, **354-2829**. Applicants must be residents of Lynden and be over 62 years of age.
- **Birch Bay:** Birch Bay Water and Sewer, 371-7100. No discount available.
- **Ferndale:** City of Ferndale, **384-4302**. Applicants must be residents of Ferndale, have a household income below \$35,000, and be over 61 or disabled.
- **Sumas:** Sumas City Hall, **988-5711**. 10% discount on TV and sewer available to 62 and older who have SS income below \$16,245 (1 person) \$21,855 (2 people).
- **Everson:** Everson City Hall, **966-3411**. 10% discount available to those who are exempt on property taxes.

Garbage:

- **Bellingham:** For a referral, call **778-8000**. Seniors who meet criteria for the above water/sewer discount are also eligible for a garbage discount of approximately \$1.50-\$3.50/month less than regular rate.
- **Blaine, Birch Bay, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Sumas, Nooksack:** No discount available

Television Cable Discount (Comcast)

Currently available only inside the city limits of Bellingham and Lynden. Eligible residents receive a 30% discount on the basic cable rate. Applicants must have an income below \$27,350 and be over 62 years of age or disabled.

Bellingham residents contact: Bellingham City Hall, 210 Lottie, Bellingham, **778-8000**.

Lynden residents contact: City of Lynden Admin, 323 Front St, Lynden, **354-1170**.

Washington Telephone Assistance Program

Applicants must be receiving benefits from DSHS (COPES, Medicaid or Food Assistance). Contact your local telephone company (**Verizon, Qwest, etc.**) using the customer service number on your telephone bill. Give them your DSHS client ID number or your Social Security number. Base charge, installation fee, and re-connect fees are discounted or waived.

Property Tax

Property Tax Exemption or Deferral: Whatcom County Assessor, **676-6790**.

Homeowners, over age 60 may receive an exemption on property taxes. Income must be less than \$35,000 (in 2008). Seniors with incomes over this figure may apply for the Tax Deferral Program, in which property taxes are paid after the eventual sale of the home.

Descriptions of each program are available at State Dept of Revenue website:

Property Tax Deferral http://dor.wa.gov/Docs/Pubs/Prop_Tax/SeniorDefs.pdf

Property Tax Exemption http://dor.wa.gov/Docs/Pubs/Prop_Tax/SeniorExempt.pdf

Other Assistance

Weatherization: The Opportunity Council, **734-5121 or 1-800-649-5121**.

Weatherization may be available for low-income home-owners/ renters who have Puget Sound Energy electrically heated homes. Check to see if the waiting list is open.

Bellingham Home Rehabilitation Program: City of Bellingham, **778-8391**.

If you are low to moderate income, 62 or older or disabled, you may qualify for a zero interest loan with no monthly payment. Qualification depends primarily on income level, amount of repairs needed, and after-rehabilitation value of property. Home must be within the Bellingham City Limits. For those with moderate incomes, who are younger than 62 and not disabled, Key Bank subsidizes Block Grant funds for a blended loan with a small monthly payment with low interest.

Home Improvement and Repair, USDA Rural Development Program, **360-428-4322**.

Assists low-income people in rural Whatcom County with down-payment assistance to purchase a home. Also provides loans and grants for home improvements and repairs affecting health and safety.

Related Senior I&A Handouts

Help with Medicare Costs and New Benefits

Resources for Tangible Needs