

Low-Income Rate Assistance Program (LIRAP)

Annual Summary Evaluation Report

For the period May 2008 through April 2009

WASHINGTON

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1.0 Executive Summary

Avista Utilities' Low-Income Rate Assistance Program (LIRAP) proposed and approved by the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) in 2001, collects funding through electric and natural gas tariff surcharges on Schedules 91 and 191. These funds are distributed by Community Action Agencies (CAAs) in a manner similar to the Federal and State-sponsored Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The purpose of LIRAP is to reduce the energy cost burden among those customers least able to pay energy bills. This is the evaluation report for the eighth program year, from May 1, 2008 through April 30, 2009.

On September 30, 2008, President Bush signed legislation that provided \$5.1 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) for the 2008/2009 heating season. This increased funding was designed to serve an additional 2 million households and raise the average grant from \$355 to \$550 and also allow states to carry over any funds remaining to next year's heating season. Although the legislation allows states to carry over funding, Washington State elected to extend their heating season rather than carry over funding. Washington's share of the LIHEAP funding was increased from \$40,450,000 to \$74,603,000. This bill also provided increased funding for weatherization assistance programs. The programs and the partnerships Avista has formed have been invaluable to customers who often have nowhere else to go for help.

The average LIRAP heat grant, which is equivalent to a LIHEAP grant increased this year to \$555. Over 4,571 electric and natural gas customers in the Company's Washington service territory received total energy grants averaging \$336. Approximately \$2,606,107 of electric revenue was

collected during the program year and \$1,472,425 natural gas revenue was collected for a total of \$4,078,532.1

The following Table 1 reflects the total amount disbursed since the inception of the Washington LIRAP program, these numbers include amounts for Direct Services, Administration, and Conservation Education.

Table 1 – Yearly Revenues and Disbursements

Program Year Beginning		Total Revenue		Total Funds		Ending		
May 1-April 30	F	Balance	100	Total Revenue		Disbursed		Balance
2001-2002	\$	0	\$	2,731,616	\$	2,476,529	\$	255,087
2002-2003	\$	255,087	\$	2,678,068	\$	2,197,150	\$	736,005
2003-2004	\$	736,005	\$	3,158,220	\$	2,533,916	\$	1,360,309
2004-2005	\$	1,360,309	\$	3,039,672	\$	3,169,051	\$	1,230,930
2005-2006	\$	1,230,930	\$	3,157,635	\$	3,230,665	\$	1,157,900
2006-2007	\$	1,157,900	\$	3,846,394	\$	4,155,463	\$	848,831
2007-2008	\$	848,831	\$	3,302,091	\$	3,320,239	\$	830,683
2008-2009	\$	830,683	\$	4,078,532	\$	2,955,033	\$	1,954,182

In this program year, 58% of LIRAP participants had household average incomes less than \$15,000. Approximately 24% of the grant recipients had annual household incomes less than \$8,000. Over 67% of the LIRAP participants had households of two or more people. Customers renting their residences constituted 66% of the total.

This program year saw the energy burden reduced by approximately 56% for customers between 51% and 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL); the energy cost burden was reduced by 47% for LIRAP participants between 100% and 125% of the FPL.

¹\$4,078,532 of the gross revenue generated from Schedules 91 and 191 over the twelve-month reporting period, \$394,932 of that total was applied to Avista's Conservation Education component.

The Company met on two occasions with its LIRAP External Energy Efficiency Board (Triple E), to review program implementation.² This Report is intended to be responsive to several areas identified for evaluation as part of the WUTC's authorization of this program.

2.0 Outreach Process

2.1 Summary of Process

Households contacting Community Action Agencies (CAA's) for help on their utility bills comprise the primary pool of potential participants. Also in Washington, Avista is currently working with over 3,535 special needs customers in the CARES (Customer Assistance Referral and Evaluation Services) program. Specially-trained representatives provide referrals to area agencies and churches for customers with special needs for help with housing, utilities, medical assistance, etc. Additional targeted marketing focuses on payment-troubled households – those experiencing a shutoff notice, carrying a large arrearage, etc.

For clients receiving "regular" assistance (i.e., LIRAP Heat), the eligibility determination is the same as the Federal LIHEAP program. The amount of the assistance provided is based on household income, energy costs (all electric or natural gas costs, used for space heating or base load) and housing type (single family, multifamily, etc.) and then calculated using the Office of Community Development's (OCD) mechanism. The benefits of using this mechanism include leveraging systems and staff knowledge already in place at the agencies as well as using a system that indexes assistance to income and need.

For clients receiving "emergency" assistance (i.e., LIRAP Project Share) or small benefit amounts, the process is similar to that used for Project Share. The amount of emergency assistance is determined on a case-by-case basis not to exceed \$300. Emergency assistance includes items such as

² The Triple E is composed of a broad array of stakeholders, including all customer groups, as well as other representatives with a direct interest in the success and improvement of the proposed energy assistance programs.

imminent danger of disconnection. All energy costs resulting from electric or natural gas usage is eligible (including kWh and therm consumption, applicable taxes, and arrearages).

CAAs follow established protocols for the qualification of, and disbursement to, eligible customers. These guidelines are promulgated by the Washington State Office of Community Development and cover 1) eligibility, 2) documentation and verification, 3) energy assistance services, and 4) allowable costs. Participating CAA's follow these guidelines for the disbursement of energy assistance funds originating from Schedules 91 and 191.

The Senior Energy Outreach is provided through the Avista CARES, via Elder Services and Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington (ALTCEW), in-home caregivers, and case managers, as well as the CAAs. Program guidelines are designed to help mitigate the impact of energy costs on vulnerable seniors living in their own homes, yet who are over income guidelines for energy assistance. Included in this program are conservation education workshops specifically designed for seniors.

Conservation education has proven to be a key component of energy assistance programs. Teaching and demonstrating improved approaches to managing energy costs can reduce customers' bills and increase customers' ability to pay. The CAA's, as part of their LIHEAP activities, have active education components. However, participation in educational activities to receive emergency assistance is no longer required. The Company has created a conservation education kit that includes weatherization and conservation materials for distribution by the agencies. The Company originally directed some energy assistance program funds to the production of support materials such as an updated video presentation that is currently used by the CAA's as part of their educational activities. Avista continues to research and expand the Conservation Education and Weatherization components of LIRAP with programs such as "Power to Conserve," and "Wattson Avista's Energy Watchdog."

3.0 Program Results

3.1 Participants and Fund Distribution

Avista Utilities' Low-Income Rate Assistance Program in total provided 4,571 grants in the current program year. The grants averaged \$336 per customer. There is a decrease in the number of grants in Program Year 8 because of the availability of additional LIHEAP funding. For the first time in its history, LIHEAP was fully funded at \$5.1 billion dollars nationally. The CAA's concentrated their efforts on distributing LIHEAP because unlike LIRAP, Washington State elected to not allow LIHEAP funds to be carried over into the next heating season.

Table 2 -- Number and Amount of Grants by Component

Year 8		1	
(97)	Number		Avg.
Program	<u>of</u>	Grant	Grant
Component	Grants	Amount	Amt.
LIRAP Heat	1,214	\$674,379	\$555.50
LIRAP Project Share	2,187	\$536,496	\$245.31
Senior Outreach	1,170	\$327,205	\$279.66
Total	4,571	\$1,538,080	\$336.49

Year 7			
Program	Number	Grant	Avg. Grant
Component	Grants	Amount	Amt.
LIRAP Heat	3,919	\$1,933,460	\$493.36
LIRAP Project Share	1,892	\$470,538	\$248.70
Senior Outreach	867	\$237,836	\$274.32
Total	6,678	\$2,641,834	\$395.60

Customers may have received a total of two grants from LIHEAP, LIRAP and LIRAP Project Share at different times during the program year. CAA's served repeat customers according to LIHEAP/LIRAP guidelines, specifically income qualifications and demonstrated need. This year 222 customers received multiple LIRAP grants.

Table 3 shows a collection of demographic data intended to be responsive to requests for general information of participating customers. This data was collected by participating Community Action Agencies.

Table 3 -- Demographic Data

	# of Households	% of Households	Cumulative %
Home Ownership			
Own	1,569	34%	34%
Rent	3,002	66%	100%
Total	4,571		
Heating Fuel Source			
Electric	2,672	58%	58%
Natural Gas	1,899	42%	100%
Other	0	0.00%	100%
Total	4,571		
Size of Household			
1 Person	1,531	33%	33%
2 People	1,189	26%	59%
3 People	783	17%	76%
4+ People	1,068	24%	100%
Total	4,571		
Annual Income Level			2
Under \$2,000	256	6%	6%
\$2,000-\$3,999	110	2%	8%
\$4,000-\$5,999	284	6%	14%
\$6,000-\$7,999	477	10%	24%
\$8,000-\$9,999	466	10%	34%
\$10,000-\$11,999	375	8%	42%
\$12,000-\$14,999	745	16%	58%
Over \$15,000	1,858	42%	100%
Total	4,571		

3.2 Program Guideline Adjustments

3.2.1 Program Distribution Percentage Change

With the increase in LIHEAP funding this past program year, and after discussion with the CAAs, it was decided to adjust percentage distribution for each LIRAP program. The original percentages recommended 80% for LIRAP Heat, 13% for LIRAP Emergency Share and 7% for Senior Energy Outreach. This program year, in order to best leverage the additional LIHEAP funds, the distribution was changed to 60% for LIRAP Heat, 26% for LIRAP Emergency Share and 14% for Senior Energy Outreach. With the recent downturn in the economy impacting many of our customers, the Company is considering keeping the percentages at the current levels rather than returning to the original distribution. These customers are often over the income guidelines for LIHEAP or LIRAP Heat, but do qualify for Project Share. We are also seeing an increase in the number of seniors asking for Senior Energy Outreach. Seniors on fixed incomes facing increased expenses with no ability to increase their income are often eligible for a Senior Energy Outreach grant.

3.2.2 Avista Natural Gas and Electric Revenue Clarification

In an effort to more equitably distribute LIRAP funds, the Company, along with the agencies decided to make a change to the previous guidelines. In the past, LIRAP funds were strictly distributed according to heat source. Ongoing discussions resulted in the decision to allow electric revenue to be used for natural gas heat customers as long as those same customers also use Avista electric.

3.3 Energy Burden

"Energy burden" is the percentage of income that households pay for energy service. This term is relevant to low-income issues as a comparison to income used for other essential needs such as food,

housing, clothing, and health services. The purpose of LIRAP is to reduce the energy burden of low-income customers. Table 4, provided by the SNAP, depicts reductions in the program year of the energy burden experienced by LIRAP participants.

The column titled "Before Benefits" represents the energy burden to low-income customers prior to LIRAP benefits. Each successive column illustrates low-income customers' energy burden after receiving the specified LIRAP benefit. For customers receiving LIRAP benefits, the energy burden has been reduced by approximately 56% for customers between 54% and 100% of the federal poverty level (FPL). The energy burden was reduced by 47% for LIRAP participants between 100% and 125% of the FPL.

Table 4 has been calculated as follows:

- The remaining households' energy burden was calculated by dividing the annual household income by the annual energy costs.
- Annual income was calculated by multiplying the three-month average, required at the time of application, by four to determine the annual amount.
- Annual energy costs were determined by the actual previous 12 months energy usage from the date of application. When annual energy costs are not available, a backup amount developed on the average cost for households, with that fuel type and vendor, was used.

Table 4 - Energy Burden -- Total Energy costs divided by household income

		ENERGY	BURDEN	1 200	9 - SNAP			704	
Table 4 - Energy	Burden Total E	nergy costs	divided by	housel	nold income			 	
	Energy costs are reduced by benefits for these calculations								
		Before Benefits	EAP or Avista	Plus Base and Fema	Plus PS	Plus Senior	Plus Avista Emer	All Benefits	
%Pov									
0-50%FPL									
	N 1323 Elec 868 Gas 2191 All	22.60% 18.20% 20.80%	11.30% 3.80% 8.30%	N/A N/A N/A	11.10% 3.60% 8.20%	11.30% 3.80% 8.30%	10.80% 3.10% 7.80%	10.70% 3.00% 7.60%	
51-100%FPL									
	N 3336 Elec 2785 Gas 6121 All	8.70% 7.50% 8.50%	4.80% 1.90% 3.70%	N/A N/A N/A	4.80% 1.90% 3.60%	4.80% 1.90% 3.70%	4.70% 1.70% 3.50%	4.70% 1.70% 3.50%	
101-125%FPL	N							2 92-0-40	
	1176 Elec 1247 Gas 2423 All	6.70% 5.20% 5.90%	4.20% 2.00% 3.10%	N/A N/A N/A	4.20% 1.90% 3.00%	4.20% 2.00% 3.10%	4.10% 1.80% 2.90%	4.10% 1.80% 2.90%	

^{*} Table 4 - Prepared and provided by Spokane Neighborhood Action Partnership

3.4 Other

3.4.1 Unspent Funding

The Company continues to monitor the agencies regarding unspent funding throughout the heating season and specifically at the end of each program year. At the end of Program Year 8, a

balance of \$1,668,703 or 46% of direct service funding was unspent, noticeably not within the acceptable range (15% - 20% is an acceptable range for carry over funding). Historically, permitting LIRAP funding to carry over to the following year has proven to be a value to all participants of the program. This policy allows the LIRAP agencies to spend their LIHEAP funds first. It has also made it possible for the LIRAP agencies to begin the heating season in October with a specific amount of funding. The Federal Government does not commit to their LIHEAP funding amount until the end of December, and sometimes not until as late as March.

This year, the agencies received additional LIHEAP funding that was nearly double what was received in previous years. While the additional funding was both needed and appreciated, there was an impact on LIRAP. Since carryover was not permitted with either LIHEAP or Project Share this year, these funds needed to be used first, leaving a larger than desirable LIRAP balance at the end of the year. Because this was an extraordinary year for LIHEAP, the CAA's continued distributing energy assistance into the summer months, when normally they would have used all funding in the spring. The Company will continue to work with the CAA's that are carrying a large unspent balance at the end of the program year. We will also consider among other policy issues, the need for carry over from one program year to the next.

Table 5 reflects the LIRAP grants distributed from the end of Program Year 8, May 1st through August 31, 2009, which leaves a current unspent balance of \$986,488 or 43% of direct services funding.

Table 5 – Number and Amount of Grants by Component, Distributed After Program Year Ended

May 1, 2009 th August 31, 200	_		
Program Component	Number of Grants	Grant Amount	Avg. Grant Amt.
LIRAP Heat	1,643	\$ 981,862	\$ 597.66
LIRAP Project Share	1,006	\$ 252,391	\$ 250.89
Senior Outreach	198	\$ 56,800	\$ 286.87
Total	2,847	\$ 1,291,053	\$ 453.00

4.0 Key Events and Future Issues

4.1 Advisory Meetings

Avista continues to meet regularly throughout the year with the LIRAP agencies. Valuable discussion occurs during the meetings that often results in continued fine-tuning and clarifying of processes. Avista appreciates the time invested by the LIRAP agencies, their experience and knowledge has made LIRAP an effective program.

4.2 Energy Conservation Television Programming

Avista continued its partnership with BELO Television (the parent company of local affiliates KREM, KSKN and NW Cable News) for the half-hour "Power to Conserve" program. The program covers low-cost and no-cost ways to save energy at home and maintain comfort during winter and summer. The goal of the program is to help Limited Income Seniors and other vulnerable populations with their energy bills by providing home energy conservation education. Avista uses television in order to reach the largest number of the target group at the least cost. The television special, targeted to low-income, senior and vulnerable customers, provides helpful energy conservation tips,

information on community resources and ways for customer to manage their energy bills. In addition, the program is available on DVD for distribution and viewing through community groups and outreach efforts.

The program was shown from July through February, at 7:00 p.m. once each month, and was supplemented by four different 30-second spots, highlighting energy conservation tips. These spots ran throughout the day and evening from July through February as well.

4.3 Fall Energy Conservation Programs

Conservation Education is an important component for customers to reduce their energy use. It is the Company's hope that each Avista customer who applies for either a LIHEAP or LIRAP Heat grant receives both information and materials to help them live a more energy efficient life. We've attempted to accomplish this goal by creating an Energy Efficiency Kit to be given to these customers. Each kit contains two compact fluorescent lights bulbs, a package of rope caulk, plastic window covering, draft stoppers for exterior light switches and electrical outlets, a shower timer, a calendar and letter with energy saving tips, and a DVD of the "Power to Conserve" program. The CAA's, as well as customers, reported that the kits were well received. In Program Year 8, 10,044 kits were distributed to eligible customers.

The CAAs continue to comment that storage of the kits as well as having to manage frequent orders and distribution of the kits added to an already hectic energy season. A change will be implemented for the upcoming heating season. The agencies will no longer be asked to distribute the kits in this manner. Instead, each customer who receives either a LIHEAP or LIRAP Heat grant will be mailed a similar Energy Efficiency kit. This process will insure that every eligible customer

receives important information and materials to help them save energy as well as reducing the burden on the CAAs.

4.4 Senior Energy Workshops and Kits

Over 1,000 seniors and low income customers attended energy workshops this past program year. The number of workshop presenters was increased this year which allowed us to increase the number of seniors reached. An energy conservation kit was given to each attending customer. The contents included energy-saving items such as compact fluorescent light bulbs, rope caulking to reduce drafts, plastic window covering, draft stoppers for exterior light switches and outlets and a calendar with energy saving tips on each month. Living an energy efficient lifestyle is discussed and the use of kit contents is demonstrated during the workshop. An additional 1800 seniors received similar materials and information at larger event gatherings for seniors. The "Power to Conserve" DVDs along with Energy Efficiency Tip Sheets were available and provided at both the workshops and senior events as well

4.5 Children's Energy Conservation Program

This marked the third program year for our mascot Wattson the Energy Watchdog. Wattson has a growing awareness among young and old. Special attention has been paid in all of our efforts to target the low income demographic, but we get the added benefit of leveraging the investment to reach all kids with our messaging. In our web enhancements, for example, we target both kids who can read and those who can't with word searches, mazes and matching games, and coloring activities. The television commercials featuring Wattson and his energy efficiency and safety messaging run on cable, broadcast and public television channels during the early morning and prime time viewing slots. The media buys have been especially advantageous because the commercials qualify as a public service announcement and can be run in additional space for free. The Wattson mascot appears at free

community events like parades or at the minor league ballpark and the local science center. In every instance we are targeting our key low income audience, but managing to reach the broader community.

Our television commercials ran in the late summer and early fall to promote simple behavior changes that save energy (both natural gas and electricity): take shorter showers and turn things off when you're not using them. The ads cleverly use humor to position kids in the role of "teaching" adults about conservation. The Wattson mascot was on the road appearing at various community events and schools where he reached nearly 25,000 parents and kids. In advance of the coming heating season, we have also refreshed the website at www.avistakids.com with a few new interactive games that are sure to keep kids of all ages coming back to learn more about energy conservation.

Finally, we are proud to report the Wattson program has been recognized internationally as a utility best practice. Hosted by Utility Communicators International, the Better Communication Competition is the oldest awards program for utility communicators. Judged by peers, the BCC is a prestigious competition which draws entries from many utilities of all sizes from around the world. The Wattson newspaper ads, television commercials and website all won awards at the Utility Communicators International 2009 BCC! The bar has been set high for the future of the Wattson program.

4.6 SNAP Educational Video

Avista continues to support the production and updating of a video that provides information to the community about SNAP's numerous low-income programs. The video is used to educate groups and individuals about the services that are available, including weatherization, conservation education and energy assistance. Over 300 people watch the video at SNAP's Community Breakfast. It is also shown to community organizations throughout the year, increasing awareness and providing additional opportunities for fundraising.

4.7 Earned Income Tax Credit

Avista partners with the Spokane County United Way as a member of the Cash, Assets, Savings and Hope (CASH) Coalition to help low-income families receive the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). As a member of CASH, the Company participates in strategic planning and outreach. The outreach effort provides free tax aide to enable families to receive EITC. Using a bill insert and Avista's Connections customer newsletter, information about EITC and free tax preparation sites was disseminated. Over 4,600 households received \$1.3 million in EITC as a result of the involvement of the coalition. Low-income families were also offered financial management classes as well as no-service-fee bank accounts. Part of this effort includes educating families to steer them away from predatory lenders and by helping them acquire a no-service-fee bank account in order to receive their refund electronically. Partners of the CASH Coalition include Avista, SNAP, AARP, VOICES, DSHS, USCW Local 21, Bank of Whitman, WA State Employees Credit Union, Inland NW Bank, Wells Fargo and American West Banks.

4.8 KHQ.com - Caregivers Resource

Beginning in 2007, the Company sponsored the Caregivers Resource page as part of the Senior Life website on KHQ.com, which is the website of Spokane's NBC affiliate. The site connects caregivers and seniors to a wide variety of resource information, including energy efficiency and energy assistance information, CARES and Senior Energy Outreach assistance, and videos of Avista's Senior Energy workshops. The "Avista Cares" energy efficiency link on the KHQ.com website receives an estimated 10,000 impressions by site visitors per month. Energy efficiency and assistance information is communicated to an average 1,200 email accounts each month through the KHQ Senior Life Newsletter. A new "Twitter" feature on the Avista page will provide quick updates on energy efficiency activities, news or information of value to this audience.

4.9 Senior Wellness Conference

As one of the sponsors of the Senior Wellness Conference, Avista connected with nearly 2,000 of its senior customers at this major event. Energy efficiency information, Senior Energy Outreach assistance information, "Power to Conserve" DVD's, compact fluorescent light bulbs and other weatherization materials were distributed. Mini workshops showing the use of the various materials were provided throughout the day.

4.10 Senior Directories and Publications

Avista continues to provide information through a one page ad that has been placed in several directories, as part of a strategic effort to reach seniors with information about energy efficiency, the Senior Energy Outreach assistance and CARES.

5.0 Reporting Protocols

5.1 Key Terms

Key terms used in this Report are described as follows.

- <u>Energy Cost Burden</u>, <u>Energy Burden</u>—The percentage of income that households pay for energy service.
- <u>LIRAP Base</u>—Funds provided for non-heating customer load.
- <u>LIRAP Heat</u>—Benefit calculated using customer heating costs. This benefit is always combined with LIRAP Base Benefit.
- <u>LIRAP Project Share</u>—Funds provided for "emergency" purposes. The term "Project Share" is used because this LIRAP emergency funding is patterned after the Project Share Program.
- Participants—Customers who received LIRAP grant(s).
- Schedule 91—Avista tariff including the electric surcharge LIRAP rate.
- Schedule 191—Avista tariff including the natural gas surcharge LIRAP rate.
- <u>Senior Energy Outreach</u>—This program denotes an offering unique to low-income senior customers.

5.2 Data Collection Measures

The data collection and measures used by Avista Utilities in the evaluation of LIRAP include:

- LIRAP Database;
- Customer Service System (Avista Utilities' information management data base);
- · Community Action Agency records; and
- Ongoing External Energy Efficiency Board review.

5.3 Participating LIRAP Agencies

- SNAP
- North Columbia Community Action Council
- Community Action Center of Whitman County
- A Community Action Partnership (Asotin County)
- Washington Gorge Action Programs
- Rural Resources Community Action

6.0 Contacts

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