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Hundreds seek help with electric bills

Reported by: SHERRIE JOHNSON

They have waited in line since 6:00 in the morning. They come from all walks of life trying to get money to pay for their utility bills. Louise Humbels' bill is over \$1,200.00 and she has a cut off notice. She has several children at home and cannot afford to lose her electricity.

"It makes it hard for the low income families to survive because it comes down to either the gas, electric or food to put on your table, it's ridiculous," says Louise Humbels.

The first monday of each month, The Annapolis Light House Homeless Shelter provides financial assistance to those who cannot pay their bills because of BGE rate hikes. There are limited funds so not everyone can receive help. The agency has \$3,000 a month to assist people.

"We have people who are working who we consider the working poor or the middle class and now they are asking for assistance," says Harry Cole, Executive Director for The Annapolis Light House Homeless Shelter.

Annapolis Light House gives each person \$100.00 towards their utility bill. So far this year BGE has shut off electricity for 15,000 customers. Last year BGE shut off 23,000 customers' electricity.

"BGE recognizes that prices have gone up because of the increase in fuel cost. We understand that the transition towards deregulation has been challenging for some of our customers," says Linda Foy, spokesperson for BGE.

The Annapolis Light House Homeless Shelter receives funds from 13 area churches, government funding and donations.

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