



NEWS RELEASE

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**€159 million available to cover increased Electricity and Gas allowances  
for social welfare recipients**

**Rising energy costs will continue to be met for pensioners and other  
recipients of the Electricity or Gas Allowance – Hanafin**

The Minister for Social and Family Affairs, Mary Hanafin T.D. today reassured those who receive the Electricity or Gas Allowance from the Department of Social and Family Affairs that additional heating needs and increased fuel prices during the winter season will be met through revised allowances.

Minister Hanafin said **“I am very conscious that any increase in fuel affects everyone right across society increasing both households and business costs. My priority is to ensure that those who most need help with rising energy costs get that support from the Government. Some 358,000 pensioner and other households qualify for Electricity and Gas Allowances through the Household Benefits package which help towards their heating, light and cooking costs throughout the year.**

**This year we have increased the funding available to €145 million for electricity and €14 million for gas. This represents additional expenditure on the household benefits package of €26 million in a full year”.**



The increase in the price of electricity will increase the cost of the electricity allowance per household from €465 to €540 per annum (based on urban rates) from 1 August 2008. In order to continue to maintain the value of the electricity and gas allowances at the same level the value of the gas allowance will be increased to €540 per annum from the same date.

**“The increased rates of payment for energy costs for customers will ensure they continue to receive the same amount of energy under the Household Benefit scheme”** said the Minister.

Minister Hanafin went on to say that she is working with her colleagues in Government on issues around fuel poverty. **“I am working with my colleagues, the Minister for Finance Brian Lenihan and Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources Eamon Ryan, to see how we can ensure the coordinated delivery of all fuel poverty initiatives across Government Departments and agencies. Energy efficiency initiatives underway, including research by Sustainable Energy Ireland, which is supported by this Department, have an important contribution to make in improving our information about homes that are vulnerable to fuel poverty.**

**We need to investigate further how best to insulate houses which have low energy efficiency, because a lot of heat and ultimately money is lost through not having sufficient insulation.”**

**ENDS**



## **Department of Social and Family Affairs**

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Allowance Type applicable	Current Annual Value €	Revised Annual Value €	Date
Electricity Urban	465.05	539.42	1 <sup>st</sup> August 2008
Electricity Rural (higher standing charge)	499.85	574.22	1 <sup>st</sup> August 2008
Gas	465.00	540.00	1 <sup>st</sup> August 2008

Under the Household Benefits scheme, the Electricity allowance covers standing charges and 2,400 units of electricity each year. Customers opting for the Gas allowance receive a similar amount of energy with the value of the Gas allowance having been aligned with that of the electric urban rate during 2006.