

8/12/2015 Draft Recommendation Number _____
Repair and Replacement of Furnaces and Air Conditioners in
Low Income Weatherization Program

Targeted Underserved Group: Low income customers

Brief Description: Include repair and replacement of air conditioners (central and window), furnaces and refrigerators as an energy efficiency measure in the low income weatherization program.

Community need: The summer weather in Austin is extremely hot for certain periods of time. When the heat index reaches 102, Austin Energy, is prohibited from disconnecting a customer's service¹ because air conditioning is necessary to protect a resident's health and safety especially the elderly and young children.² While it is possible to live through an Austin summer with no air conditioning, people without air conditioning in their homes are encouraged to take shelter in public buildings with air conditioning during the hottest times of the day.

Over one-fourth (118,241) of Austin Energy's residential customers have incomes that qualify for Free Weatherization.³ Customers living with income below 50% of the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG) spend 37.6% of household income on electricity. Those at 51 to 100% of FPG spend 11.3% and those at 101 to 200% FPG spend 5.9%. Those above 400% of the FPG spend 1.6%.⁴

Insert data on age of housing stock housing stock

As utility bills increase because of higher rates and the pass through of regulatory, community benefit charge and other per kilowatt-hour charges, low income customers are the most profoundly impacted because the energy burden becomes an even higher percentage of household income. There are large numbers of households in the Austin Energy service area with low income, high utility bills and very few energy efficiency program resources.

In Texas, 26% of all home energy use is attributable to central air conditioning, 11% to the refrigerator, 9% to space heating, 7% to water heating and 2% to room air conditioning.⁵ Including repair and replacement of space conditioning equipment and

¹ Austin City Code §15-9-109.

² Sweating out a Texas heat wave, A guide to preventing hot weather illness.

³ Memorandum from Liz Jambor, EdD, Manager, to Low Income Consumer Advisory Task Force 01//5/15., p 5.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ GDS Associates, Evaluation of Austin energy's ARRA-Supported Weatherization Assistance Program, September 2012, p. 51.

refrigerators allows the program to target the most energy intensive equipment in typical households.

Program Description: In homes originally designed with central air conditioners and furnaces provide repair or replacement as needed based on an assessment of the home and equipment as is the practice in the Energy Star Home Performance program based on factors such as; the age of the home, age of unit and efficiency, refrigerant Type (R-22).

Other considerations are coordination with the gas company program to acquire additional program resources for customers living in mixed fuel homes, the longevity of tune/up and maintenance options and the feasibility of obtaining savings through the installation of a programmable thermostat or other load control measure.

Because participation in the weatherization is time restricted decisions about repair and replacement of equipment should be made to ensure to the best of the evaluator's ability that the repair or replacement will provide reliable service to the eligible customers until the customer and property are eligible to reapply for the program.

Will add standards for refrigerator replacement and have the the meeting.