



SESSION

Spring 2009

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To learn more about our Energy Assistance Program, call 1-800-944-3281.

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A NEWSLETTER FOR SOUTHEAST MINNESOTA COMMUNITIES

From the Desk of Community Development Director Wayne Stenberg

Semcac Community Development has been moving in the direction of rehabilitating homes and rental units since the large downturn in the housing market. Over the last few years we have transitioned from new construction and have looked for efficient ways to help preserve the existing affordable housing across the region.

One of Semcac Community Development's newest strengths has been our successful administration of projects under the Small Cities Development Program, funded through the MN Department of Employment and Economic Development. This program helps homeowners and rental property owners modernize plumbing, electrical, and heating systems, replace roofs and make other health and safety related repairs to housing units. Here at Semcac, we have the unique ability to couple this funding with our other housing-related programs, such as Weatherization, Energy Related Repair and Minnesota Housing's rehab loan opportunities. Currently, we are in the midst of a Small Cities project in Rushford and are working with the Albert Lea HRA to finish up a project there. We will soon begin administering more Small Cities projects—one in eastern Fillmore County and a second round in Albert Lea. We are on track to update over 70 homes through this program, and we hope to add to this number as we find other cities and counties interested in working with us.

Semcac Community Development's Energy Assistance Program has had another busy year. To date, 6,371 households have been served this heating season, which is 10.7 percent more than last year. Although we typically have to end the program in May, this year we will process applications through July 2. This additional time allows us to continue assisting households faced with disconnect notices. So far we have assisted over 1,700 households with additional crisis assistance. Call us at 1-800-944-3281 to learn more about our Energy Assistance Program.

Semcac Community Development offers many programs and services that benefit your communities. I hope you'll take a minute or two to turn the page and read more about the exciting happenings with our Weatherization Program and our role in preparing homes to use less energy in the years to come.

Flood Update

Semcac Community Development is wrapping up the last of the Quick Start disaster-recovery loans and the Greater Minnesota Housing Fund grants. Over \$9.2 million have been administered by the department since October 2007. Although we closed loans in all five counties where we administered the program, a large portion of these dollars went to the residents of Rushford, where much of the city was damaged by flood waters. Recovery funding is available until mid-June, when all loan documents must be closed and filed with Minnesota Housing.

Semcac will administer Minnesota Housing's Flood Insurance Recovery Program through the end of the year to help affected homeowners pay flood insurance premiums. This program is available to households who received Quick Start loans or a residential SBA Disaster Loan. Contact Semcac at 507-864-7741 to learn more.





To learn more about our Weatherization Program or other programs that provide energy-efficient appliances, call 1-507-864-7741



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Weatherization and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

A part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), signed into law on February 17, 2009, was considerable investment in the Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program. This stimulus funding has been granted to the Minnesota Department of Energy Security which in turn makes grants to the state's numerous Weatherization programs, most often administered by Community Action Agencies like Semcac. Over the next two years, Semcac's Weatherization Program has been granted \$7.8 million to significantly improve the energy efficiency of over 1,600 homes in Southeast Minnesota—a 170 percent increase in the program's customary outcomes.

Semcac's Weatherization Program employs a program coordinator, four housing rehab specialists, a program specialist, and three work crews with three members each to weatherize around 300 homes a year in the counties of Dodge, Fillmore, Freeborn, Houston, Mower, Olmsted, Steele and Winona. Due to the ARRA funding, in recent months we have added four more auditors, three more crew members and one office assistant. We have also contracted with local contractors that have the background and equipment to help us accomplish this tremendous task.



As part of the ARRA funding, Weatherization will also increase the average amount of work completed in each home from about \$3,000 to \$6,500 per home. This expansion will allow us to further improve energy efficiency and possibly correct safety hazards such as poor electrical wiring. By the time the work is completed, the home's energy consumption will be reduced by 15–30%.

To be eligible for Weatherization, a household must qualify for the Energy Assistance Program, which has income guidelines at 50 percent of the State Median Income. For example, a household of one member would qualify if annual household income is less than \$21,184. Although we do not have a start date for the ARRA-funded program expansion at the time of this printing, we anticipate beginning by July 1, 2009.

Save Money this Summer!

The average home spends over \$1,900 each year on energy. Here are some quick tips to help you save money this summer:

- ⚙ Nothing is more energy efficient for cooking than your microwave. It uses two-thirds less energy than your stove.
- ⚙ Believe it or not the dishwasher uses less water than washing dishes by hand—but make sure it is fully loaded before you turn it on.
- ⚙ Keeping the freezer and the fridge fuller helps to keep items from heating up as fast when the door is opened.
- ⚙ Do the laundry more efficiently by using only warm or cold water. Always use cold water when washing clothes and you'll see a 4 percent savings.
- ⚙ If you have the space, line-drying is *the* best way to go when drying clothes.
- ⚙ When you need to run the dryer, use full loads and make sure you clean the lint trap after *every* load.
- ⚙ Make sure to turn off appliances and lighting when not in use.
- ⚙ Unplug entertainment items when not in use—make sure to turn them off at the power strip if in use.

