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Columbia Gas, State Officials Announce Efforts to Promote Energy Efficiency as Part of Merrimack Valley Restoration Effort

LAWRENCE, Mass. – Columbia Gas of Massachusetts and State officials today announced continued efforts to promote energy efficiency as part of the Merrimack Valley restoration effort.

Columbia Gas is in the process of and will continue to replace affected equipment with energy efficient or Mass Save-eligible gas models, wherever possible, at no cost to the customer.

Mass Save is a collaborative of Massachusetts' natural gas and electric utilities and energy efficiency service providers that empowers residents, businesses, and communities to make energy efficient upgrades by offering rebates.

Additionally, Columbia Gas and state officials announced intentions to launch a targeted weatherization and energy efficiency campaign in the affected area.

“Our administration remains committed to ensuring residents and businesses in the Merrimack Valley have their utility services restored as quickly and safely possible,” **said Governor Charlie Baker**. “It is important that during this process energy efficient equipment options are made available and installed whenever possible, which will not only benefit the environment, but will reduce energy bills for these customers going forward.”

“As we restore utility services and rebuild in the Merrimack Valley, the Baker-Polito Administration continues to ensure Columbia Gas has devoted resources to weatherization and energy efficient equipment,” **said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matthew Beaton**. “This effort will have long term benefits for residents and businesses while reducing costs for businesses and residents.”

“As we restore natural gas service in the Merrimack Valley, we are making sure that we do so with state-of-the-art gas infrastructure and equipment that benefits the community—and energy efficient equipment is a critical part of that effort,” **said Joe Albanese, Chief Recovery Officer, who was appointed by Governor Baker**.

“Through the recovery of service and beyond, we are striving to bring to the residents of the Merrimack Valley energy efficiency and modern heating equipment that reduces energy costs and pollution,” **said Pablo Vegas, Chief Restoration Officer for Columbia Gas**.

Process for homes where Columbia Gas is sourcing and installing appliances and equipment:

Columbia Gas has directed its contractors to install high efficiency gas heating and hot water equipment whenever possible, including upgrading from standard to high efficiency equipment. This is done at no cost to the customer.

For gas heating and hot water solutions, such as furnaces, boilers, and water heaters, Columbia Gas is and will continue to install Mass Save-eligible products anytime there is an opportunity to do so.

Mass Save-eligible products will be installed so long as:

- The house does not have pre-existing conditions that do not allow for the safe installation of this technology. High efficiency equipment requires exterior ventilation and inside piping that may not be present in certain homes and buildings. The licensed professional installing the gas equipment will decide the best equipment to install given the specific circumstances of that customer, while always trying to utilize Mass Save-eligible products, in consultation with the customer.
- Installation of Mass Save-eligible products does not dramatically slow down the process of providing heat and hot water to customers.

High Efficiency to High Efficiency

If customers had high efficiency equipment before the September 13 event, the company will be replacing that high efficiency equipment without any charge to the customer. This will take place when contractors do work inside customers' homes.

Standard Efficiency to High Efficiency

For those customers who had standard equipment before the event, the company will replace it with high efficiency equipment, wherever possible, in accordance with the conditions above. This will take place when contractors do work inside customers' homes and in consultation with the customer.

Process for homes where customers are sourcing and installing their own appliances and equipment (self-mitigation):

When a customer chooses to install their own furnaces, boilers, and water heaters—a process referred to as self-mitigation—Columbia Gas is encouraging them to use Mass Save-eligible equipment. [A list of specifications for Mass Save-eligible equipment can be found here.](#)

High Efficiency to High Efficiency

If customers had high efficiency equipment before the September 13 event, the company will cover the costs of purchasing and installing like-for-like high efficiency equipment. Customers can initiate that process by filing a claim with Columbia Gas.

Standard Efficiency to High Efficiency

If customers had standard-efficiency equipment before the event, there will be no-cost to the customer for purchasing or installing high efficiency equipment (Mass Save-eligible), although there may be costs to the customer for necessary changes in pipes or ventilation. The cost of the equipment will be covered by: (a) the claim on damaged equipment (b) Mass Save rebates on the gas equipment and (c) if needed, additional Columbia Gas resources.

As part of the existing Columbia Gas claims process, customers can submit an estimate for the gas equipment before they purchase it. If the scheduled claim payment from Columbia Gas for replacement is less than the estimate of the Mass Save-eligible equipment, the claims adjuster will then connect the customer to Columbia Gas's Energy Efficiency Program, which will assist customers with obtaining a rebate with Mass Save for this equipment. To contact the Columbia Gas Energy Efficiency program directly for assistance, customers can email Efficiency@ColumbiaGasMA.com or call [1-508-836-7388](tel:1-508-836-7388).

Plan for energy efficiency in the future

Columbia Gas announced its intention to launch a targeted weatherization and energy efficiency campaign in the affected areas in coordination with the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, the Department of Energy Resource, and the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center.

The elements of that Energy Efficiency program will include:

- Dedicated Merrimack Valley crews and funding for an expedited response/lower wait times;
- No co-pay for insulation and air sealing for impacted customers;
- Targeting every customer for weatherization;
- Pursuing high efficiency upgrades for customers whose equipment was repaired rather than immediately replaced; and
- Collaborating with National Grid energy efficiency on marketing air source heat pumps as secondary heat. Customers can call 866-251-5667 for more information on this.

About Columbia Gas of Massachusetts

Columbia Gas of Massachusetts delivers clean, affordable and efficient natural gas to over 320,000 natural gas customers in southeastern Massachusetts, the greater Springfield area and the Merrimack Valley. Headquartered in Westborough, Massachusetts, the company is the largest gas-only provider in the state and is one of NiSource's seven regulated utility companies. NiSource (NYSE:NI) is one of the largest fully-regulated utility companies in the United States, serving approximately 3.5 million natural gas customers and 500,000 electric customers through its local Columbia Gas and NIPSCO brands. More information about Columbia Gas of Massachusetts is available at www.ColumbiaGasMA.com.

About NiSource

NiSource Inc. (NYSE: NI) is one of the largest fully-regulated utility companies in the United States, serving approximately 3.5 million natural gas customers and 500,000 electric customers across seven states through its local Columbia Gas and NIPSCO brands. Based in Merrillville, Indiana, NiSource's approximately 8,000 employees are focused on safely delivering reliable and affordable energy to our customers and communities we serve. NiSource has been designated a World's Most Ethical Company by the Ethisphere Institute since 2012, is a member of the Dow Jones Sustainability - North America Index and was named by *Forbes* magazine as the top-rated utility among America's Best Large Employers in 2017. Additional information about NiSource, its investments in modern infrastructure and systems, its commitments and its local brands can be found at www.nisource.com. Follow us at www.facebook.com/nisource, www.linkedin.com/company/nisource or www.twitter.com/nisourceinc. NI-F

About MassSave

Mass Save is a collaborative of Massachusetts' natural gas and electric utilities and energy efficiency service providers, including Berkshire Gas, Blackstone Gas Company, Cape Light Compact, Columbia Gas of Massachusetts, Eversource, Liberty Utilities, National Grid and Unitil. We empower residents, businesses, and communities to make energy efficient upgrades by offering a wide range of services, rebates, incentives, trainings, and information. These programs and

services are managed and delivered by electric and gas Sponsors (working closely with the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources), providing the energy expertise to help you save energy and money. The funding is supported from a charge on customers' energy bills. Through the joint efforts of the Mass Save collaborative, Massachusetts has earned top ranking as the #1 state in the nation for energy efficiency according to the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE).

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