



No A/C Or Fan Help This Summer From Local Agency

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Hundreds of Cincinnatians who need relief from the hot Queen City summer won't be able to get assistance from the Cincinnati-Hamilton County Community Action Agency.

"As it stands right now we are looking at a 75% reduction in our summer budget, so we're operating with 25% of what we normally do," said Mason Gray, the agency's community relations director.

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) is federally funded and administered across the state by the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD).

ODOD had to spend \$3 million of its summer allocation to meet the needs of the 2008 winter.

So, that meant cuts in summer HEAP funding.

In real dollars the budget of \$725,000 has been trimmed to \$123,000.

That's pushed the start of the "heat relief" program back from June 1 to July 1.

"Probably more importantly that that, we won't be able to give out air conditioners and fans this summer," Gray said.

"We typically give out in the neighborhood of 1,400 to 1,500 fans and air conditioners," said Gray.

"Unfortunately, we don't have the money to do that this year."

Gray added that CAA will be able to help some people with their utility bills, but funds are limited for that as well.

Payments last year were \$175 per household, but this year will be reduced to \$100.

With natural gas prices likely to rise this winter, Gray says he's concerned looking ahead toward November and December.

The budget for the winter program right now is \$1.7 million, which helps about 9,000 people.

"We do not know what the budget will look like this year, but we anticipate a significant hit," said Gray.

"Again, it's going to be a situation where we're not going to be able to help as many people as we normally do," said Gray. "So, people need to be prepared for that."