

## Handling Emergency Situations

The EmPower New York and Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Programs are not emergency-services programs. The programs do, however, attempt to respond to emergency situations within the program guidelines and the existing infrastructure for the provision of services.

Prior to providing services it is important to:

- A. *Verify that home is owned by the applicant* (NOTE: In some cases, “Life Use” situations may be honored with appropriate documentation.) **Emergencies occurring in rental situations must be referred to the landlord, unless the emergency involves a tenant-owned appliance.**
- B. Attempt to gain a first person understanding of the situation from the household, or an appropriate representative of the household, such as an assisting family member.
- C. Contact the Program Implementer as soon as possible to gain approval. Contractors may proceed, at risk, prior to approval. The guidance below explains what the Program consider to be an emergency situation.

Evaluate whether a true emergency exists. Only the measures below meet criteria for emergency considerations.

### A. Heating System

- a. Emergency: Suspect natural gas leak: When natural gas leaks are found or suspected in the dwelling, the Participating Contractor **MUST** contact, or ensure that the household contacts the local Utility **IMMEDIATELY**.
  - i. The Participating Contractor must ensure that the household understands potential hazards and acts appropriately. **It is the Participating Contractor’s responsibility to become familiar with hazards related to natural gas leaks and other hazards and take appropriate actions in situations where life-threatening conditions exist.** If, for example, a life-threatening situation exists, such as a significant natural gas or propane leak, the Participating Contractor must instruct the family to leave the home immediately and not turn off or on any light switches or other electronic devices if the risk of sparks is a concern.
  - ii. For low-income customers - If the heating system is shut down due to health risks, the Participating Contractor must refer the household to the Department of Social Services (DSS) for the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Heating Emergency Repair and Replacement (HERR) program prior to referral to EmPower. See “Gas Leak Safety Procedures” in Section 13. If minor gas leaks are found, please refer to the Material and Installation Guide (MIG) for Program guidance (Section 9).
- b. Emergency: Suspect Carbon Monoxide CO leak/poisoning:
  - i. **It is the Participating Contractor’s responsibility to become familiar with hazards related to Carbon Monoxide leaks and other hazards and take appropriate actions in situations where life-threatening conditions exist.** If a life-threatening

situation exists, the Participating Contractor must instruct the household to call the local fire department, or 911.

- ii. When a Carbon Monoxide (CO) leak is suspected in the dwelling, please refer to the BPI Technical Standards for the Building Analyst Professional for guidance on appropriate testing procedure;  
([http://www.bpi.org/Web%20Download/BPI%20Standards/Building\\_Analyst\\_Professional\\_1\\_4\\_12.pdf](http://www.bpi.org/Web%20Download/BPI%20Standards/Building_Analyst_Professional_1_4_12.pdf)).
- c. Emergency: Heating system failure/inadequate heat for health reasons:
  - i. Contact the Program Implementer as soon as you can to discuss the situation and the proposed upgrades to determine eligibility.
  - ii. Low-Income customers:
    - 1. Participating Contractor must refer household to HERR program prior to referral to EmPower.
    - 2. If an income-eligible household is rejected for service by HERR, household may be referred for services to EmPower if documentation of the rejection by HERR is provided. Referral to and coordination with the local Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) Agency may be explored by the Program Implementer whenever the household is eligible for WAP.
- d. Non-Emergency: In situations where the heating system is functioning and providing inadequate heat but the household expresses concerns about mild discomfort and/or inconvenience, the household shall follow the normal procedures for Home Performance with ENERGY STAR.

#### B. Water Heater

- a. Emergency: In situations where the current water heater is not functional and there is a need for immediate replacement (such as health risks), the household can be offered the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program.
  - i. Water heaters may only be replaced through EmPower in situations where the current water heater poses a health risk due to venting problems. See Section 13 – ***Tips and Solutions to Solve Water Heating Venting Issues*** for more information.
- b. Non-Emergency: In situations where the current water heater is not functional but there is no need for immediate intervention, the household can be offered incentives provided through Home Performance with ENERGY STAR. In these situations, the household's needs will be evaluated according to normal, non-emergency procedures.

#### C. Refrigerator

- a. Emergency: In situations where the refrigerator is not functioning well enough to cool food or medicine safely, household may apply to the Program.
  - i. For EmPower eligible customers: The Program Implementer will attempt to provide services as soon as possible. However, immediate replacement cannot be guaranteed.
- b. Non-Emergency: In situations where the refrigerator is functioning but the household expresses concerns about a refrigerator, such as concerns

about the age of the refrigerator, the household's needs will be evaluated according to normal, non-emergency procedures.

D. Air Conditioner

- a. Emergency: In situations where the air conditioning unit is not functional and poses medical risks, household can be offered Home Performance with ENERGY STAR and served on an emergency basis.
- b. Non-Emergency: In situations where the air conditioning unit is not functional and creates discomfort in the home, the household's needs will be evaluated according to non-emergency procedures.

After identifying an emergency and determining that the emergency services can be provided within the design of the Program:

- A. Submit the application to determine incentive eligibility.
- B. A full, comprehensive audit is not required to happen first to address the emergency situation provided that the necessary testing is completed. Program audits should be performed within 2 weeks if the customer intends to move forward with energy efficiency services through the Program.
- C. Submit the work-scope, and complete the required testing for the applicable measure.