

Fortunately, we're far better prepared for this winter energy challenge because of actions we took this fall and the new steps I am taking will ensure that we remain prepared. In late September, I directed the Department of Energy to exchange 30 million barrels of crude oil from the Federal Government's Strategic Petroleum Reserve. This was a step to prevent a supply crisis that would have had a particularly harsh effect on heating oil inventories in the Northeast.

At the time, many said that using the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to help Americans heat their homes was a terrible idea, that it would never work. Well, now we have the results. I'm pleased to report that inventories of crude oil are up and prices have dropped substantially, from \$37 to \$26 a barrel. Home heating oil prices also have fallen in recent weeks, and supply shortfalls have been cut by more than half.

But even though heating oil prices have begun to ease, the cost of heating a home still is too high, especially for families on low and fixed incomes. That's why I'm releasing \$300 million in funds from our Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Along with similar funds I released earlier this fall, we've now devoted more than \$850 million to assist families who can least afford to bear the burden of high energy prices this winter.

The simple lesson we've learned again and again is that the best way to meet challenges is to stay ahead of them. So I am taking some new steps to prepare for more cold weather this winter. First, I'm directing the Departments of Energy and Transportation to make extra efforts to keep navigation lanes in U.S. harbors free of ice for ships bringing in heating oil. I'm also asking them to work with States to relieve bottlenecks on our Nation's roads, rivers, and pipelines.

Second, in the Northwest, which is experiencing tight electricity supplies, I am asking all Federal facilities to join those in California that are already reducing their electricity consumption during peak hours. This will help to keep lights and heat on in homes and businesses across the West.

Third, Energy Secretary Richardson has extended an emergency order to powerplants providing electricity to California to keep the power flowing in that hard-hit State.

Fourth, I am asking the Small Business Administration to reach out to small businesses with high energy costs to make them aware of special SBA loans that will allow them to stretch out their energy payments. That could be a big help for businesses trying to get through this cold winter.

None of us can control the weather. But all of us are responsible for how we respond to and prepare for it. With the actions I am taking, the Federal Government is fulfilling its responsibility. Across the Nation, Americans are doing their part: snowplow drivers are working late into the night; emergency shelter workers are offering a warm place to sleep for families whose homes are without power; younger neighbors are bringing hot food to their older neighbors and shoveling their walkways.

The worst weather always seems to bring out the best in the American people. If we continue to work together and bring out the best in each other, we'll get through this cold weather just fine and usher in a new year of unlimited promise for our great Nation.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:50 p.m. on December 29 in the Map Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 30. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 29 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

Memorandum on Potential Electricity Shortages in Western States

December 30, 2000

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Potential Electricity Shortages in Western States

Increased demand for electricity during cold winter weather can make it a challenge for electric utilities to meet the demand of their customers and keep lights on and their homes and businesses warm. Currently, the supply of electric power is tight on the West Coast due to record demand for electricity. The region faces the possibility of electricity

shortages in some areas, which would put both consumers and businesses at risk.

The Federal Government is among the largest consumers of electricity in Western States. It is important that the Federal Government lead by example in taking energy conserving steps to reduce the risk and severity of power outages. Therefore, I direct that:

- All managers of all Federal buildings in Washington and Oregon join those in California and take steps to reduce consumption of power to the maximum extent practicable consistent with public health and welfare, and that of employees; and
- Federal agencies coordinate with other State and local government agencies to minimize the use of electricity in all government buildings in Washington, Oregon, and California.

When the Federal Government, State governments, businesses, and consumers work together to use electricity wisely, we can reduce the risk of power shortages in the short term and keep the power on.

William J. Clinton

Memorandum on Keeping the Heating Fuel Distribution System Open

December 30, 2000

Memorandum for the Secretary of Energy, the Secretary of Transportation, Commandant of the United States Coast Guard

Subject: Keeping the Heating Fuel Distribution System Open

When inclement weather strikes and the demand for heating fuel rises, the distribution system through which fuel is delivered is often placed at great strain. Freezing harbors delay the delivery of critical fuel supplies, and the demand for heating fuel deliveries rises, increasing workload of drivers who deliver fuel to homes and businesses. Last winter, for example, critical deliveries of heating oil were delayed as harbors froze and barges were unable to reach their docks.

In order to minimize the likelihood of bottlenecks in the heating fuel distribution sys-

tem, I direct the Secretaries of Energy and Transportation to work together and take all reasonable measures to keep the harbors open and the delivery trucks on the roads. If shipping channels freeze, the Coast Guard shall be prepared to keep them open to the extent possible. The Department of Transportation shall inform State and local governments and private companies as appropriate about the criteria and procedures for obtaining waivers from hours of service regulations in order to increase trucking capacity for emergency fuel deliveries and shall respond to such requests as quickly as possible.

Finally, the Department of Energy's Office of Energy Emergencies shall coordinate closely with the Department of Transportation's Emergency Transportation Representative to address any other transportation problems as they arise in order to keep heating fuel moving through the distribution system to the consumer.

William J. Clinton

Memorandum on Providing Loans to Small Businesses Facing High Energy Costs

December 30, 2000

Memorandum for the Administrator of the Small Business Administration

Subject: Providing Loans to Small Businesses Facing High Energy Costs

Increased demand for energy and a colder than normal winter has led to higher than normal energy costs. Because many small businesses lack significant capital reserves, they may lack the resources or cash flow to meet higher energy bills.

In order to assist such businesses, I am directing you to begin aggressive outreach programs to potential borrowers, SBA lenders, and other partners to make them aware of the SBA lending and technical assistance programs that are available to assist small businesses that may need assistance in meeting energy bills. SBA-guaranteed loans offer eligible small businesses sufficient cash to continue to meet their immediate energy needs and will allow them to spread their energy payments over a longer period than