

Utilities

General Principle

If utility services are not provided by a landlord, certain utility costs may be included as eligible components of the shelter allowance. Shelter allowances, inclusive of all components, may never exceed established shelter maximums.

Fuel

An allowance may be issued to cover reasonable, actual costs of adequate fuel supply for heating and cooking, (i.e., natural gas, oil, naphtha gas, electricity, cord wood, or other fuel).

To assist the client in budgeting, and to ensure adequacy of the allowance, fuel costs may be averaged out on the basis of previous actual costs and adjusted seasonally.

Recipients should be encouraged to apply to utility suppliers, such as BC Hydro, to have utility bills placed on a 12-month, equal payment plan.

Where recipients use fuel wood, and have access to a supply, they may be issued a reasonable allowance for fuel for a power saw for cutting their own wood. In this situation, no allowance is to be issued for purchase of wood.

Administering authorities may establish standard community rates for fuel allowances if they are:

- universally applied
- based on average expenditures
- adjusted seasonally
- reasonable, and differentiated in relation to family unit size

Electrical Services

Subject to the band signing a contribution agreement for community infrastructure and services:

- Where the electricity is generated by the band or by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), payment for actual, reasonable electrical costs based upon rates set in accordance with prevailing rates of the provincial authority in the area (e.g., BC Hydro).
- Where electrical services are provided by a private or provincial authority (e.g., BC Hydro), monthly payments may be made based on actual, reasonable costs.

Water Supply, Sewage Disposal, and Garbage Pick-up

These services are considered a component of the shelter allowance only if all users in the community pay for them whether or not they are in receipt of social assistance.

Subject to the band signing a contribution agreement for community infrastructure and services:

- payment for actual water costs may not exceed \$7.10 per month
- payment for actual sewer costs may not exceed \$5.50 per month
- payment for actual garbage disposal costs may not exceed \$6.20 per month

Where contribution agreements are not in effect, payment for these services may be based on reasonable, actual monthly costs.

Telephone Service

Only monthly rental of basic residential single line service, and monthly rental of a basic telephone through the telephone company may be considered as components of the telephone service when calculating shelter costs.

Installation costs of a telephone may be covered by a special needs allowance.

House Insurance Premiums

An allowance for house insurance premiums may be granted provided that the following apply:

- the house is owned, lived in, and insured by the recipient
- the allowance is averaged over a 12-month period
- the insurance is not included in a monthly housing loan payment

The house insurance premium may also include the contents of the house.