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# Deaths from fuel poverty could soar amid the pandemic, campaigners warn

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DEATHS from fuel poverty could soar during the coronavirus crisis, campaign group Fuel Poverty Action (FPA) warned today.

After the government's announcement that people should stay indoors and

socially distance, with the likelihood of higher fuel bills as a result, the FPA warned that Britain's poorest and most vulnerable won't be able to afford to heat their homes, or even to keep the lights on.

People's inability to afford fuel bills already costs 9,000 lives a year, according to FPA.

The group launched a petition calling for the government to provide free credit to all prepayment meter users, guarantee that customers in financial distress — including those self-isolating or losing jobs — will have bills reduced to amounts they can afford rather than just deferred, and issue a moratorium

on debt repayments.

FPA is also demanding the government publicise the support available to the public prominently, through bulletins and advertisements, as well as ensuring they can access help quickly, without proving benefit entitlement.

Lewisham Pensioners Forum's Bridgit Sam-Bailey said: "People like myself who are [self-isolating] need to keep ourselves warm, primarily because we are not going out, and we are not as active as we would normally be.

"If our supplies are terminated we [won't] die of Covid-19, we'll be frozen. If our bills are higher than the norm, then they should be frozen."

## Southwark Group of Tenants

Organisation's Rhiannon Hughes said:

“Already people are terrified to put their heating or electric on knowing that they will be using it beyond their means.”

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