

**THE NEW HAMPSHIRE
RATE WATCHER**
(It's Your Money)

Consumer Newsletter of the
New Hampshire Office of Consumer Advocate
21 S. Fruit Street, Suite 18
Concord, NH 03301
603-271-1172
website: www.oca.nh.gov

Volume 9

Fall 2006

Q. Do you know what money-saving, energy efficiency programs are available to you?

A. Read this, and you will!

CURRENT ENERGY PRICES AND WINTER WEATHER

Fuel Prices:	<u>October 2006</u>	<u>October 2005</u>
Heating Oil	\$ 2.405/gal.	\$ 2.623/gal.
Propane	\$ 2.387/gal.	\$ 2.216/gal.
Kerosene	\$ 2.840/gal.	\$ 3.003/gal.
Electricity	\$.14454/kwh	\$ 0.11863/kwh
Natural Gas 1 st tier	\$ 1.2581/therm	\$ 1.4103/therm
Natural Gas 2 nd tier	\$ 1.1347/therm	\$ 1.2869/therm
Gasoline	\$ 2.774/gal.	\$ 2.823/gal.
Diesel	\$ 2.966/gal.	\$ 2.925/gal.

The Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration released its annual outlook for residential heating bills. It states that for the first time since the 2001-02 winter, prices are projected to be either lower than or close to last year's prices. This is good news. Of course, this depends on what type of fuel you use and the biggest wild card, the weather! According to the annual outlook we are expecting a winter that is colder than last year but warmer than usual. To view the annual outlook, visit www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/steo/pub/contents.html

Source: Governor's Office of Energy and Planning

CONSERVE ENERGY, SAVE MONEY AND REDUCE POLLUTION

In this time of volatile energy prices, energy efficiency and conservation are a customer's best defense to reduce energy bills and to lessen our impact on the environment. For ideas about conserving energy, contact the Office of Energy and Planning at www.nh.gov/oep or 603-271-2155; the US Department of Energy at www.energy.gov or 800-342-5363; and the Alliance to Save Energy at www.energyhog.org or www.powerisinyourhands.org.

You can also get NH-specific information on ratepayer-funded programs at www.nhsaves.com.

Several efficiency programs and incentives exist for residential utility customers in NH. These include programs for new construction and retrofitting existing structures, as well as rebate programs for selected lighting and appliances. Some of these programs and incentives are described below, according to which entity (e.g., utility or agency) that offers or administers the program. Contact information for these utilities and agencies is listed on the last page of this newsletter; you may also visit www.nhsaves.com or call 1-866-266-2420. You pay for these programs; so use them!

Offered to all NH residents regardless of utility:

- *Income Qualified Weatherization* – Qualified households reduce energy use and costs by installing energy-efficiency improvements at no cost. For information regarding eligibility and to apply please contact your local Community Action Agency (CAA).

Northern Utilities, Inc. (natural gas)

- *Home Energy Assessment* – Receive up to \$150 toward an in-home energy assessment. Low-income consumers may receive an assessment for free.

- *Weatherization Rebate* – Save on the cost of installing weatherization improvements, 50% for homeowners (75% for tenants) up to \$1500 towards the cost to install qualified energy improvements when performed by a professional contractor.
- *Self-Install Weatherization Rebate* – Receive a rebate of up to \$25 per customer for qualifying weatherization measures including weather stripping, poly wrap for windows, faucet aerators, caulking, foam insulation spray, pipe insulation, and garage door seals.
- *High Efficiency Heating Equipment* – Save up to \$800 for high-efficiency, gas-fired boilers and furnaces installed by a qualified installer.
- *High Efficiency Indirect Water Heating* – Receive a rebate of up to \$300 when you purchase and install a qualifying, high-efficiency, natural gas indirect water heating unit.
- *On-Demand Tankless Water Heating* – Receive a \$300 rebate when you purchase and install an on-demand tankless water heating unit.
- *ENERGY STAR® Clock Thermostats* – Receive a maximum rebate of \$50 for the purchase of up to two ENERGY STAR® clock thermostats.
- *ENERGY STAR® Windows* – Receive \$10 for every ENERGY STAR® window installed in your home.

KeySpan Energy Delivery New England (formerly Energy North) (natural gas)

- *Residential Weatherization* – Receive a rebate covering 20% of the cost, up to \$750, of weatherization measures installed in homes built before January 1, 1995. Work must be performed by a KeySpan approved contractor.
- *Energy Star® Clock Thermostats* – Receive a maximum rebate of \$50 for the purchase of up to two Energy Star® clock thermostats.
- *Energy Star® Windows* – Receive \$10 for every Energy Star® window replaced in your home.
- *On-Demand Tankless Water Heating* – Receive a \$300 rebate when you purchase and install a qualified on-demand tankless water heating unit.
- *High-Efficiency Heating Equipment* – Receive a rebate of up to \$800 for qualifying, high-efficiency, natural gas heating equipment.
- *High-Efficiency Indirect Water Heating* – Receive a rebate of \$300 when you purchase and install a qualifying, high-efficiency, natural gas indirect water heating unit.
- Log onto: www.keyspansaves.com to purchase energy saving products online. KeySpan customers are eligible for a 20% discount. Simply enter discount code KEYENH when you check out.

Statewide Electric Energy Efficiency Programs

National Grid, Unitil Energy System, Public Service Co. of NH, NH Electric Cooperative

- *Home Energy Solutions* – Receive a free Home Energy Assessment and up to \$4,000 in rebates and incentives for qualified electric efficiency improvements. Additional funds may be available if you also qualify for the NH Weatherization Program. For more information, contact your electric utility.

- *Energy Star® Lighting* – Receive rebate coupons redeemable at participating retailers for Energy Star® rated light bulbs and fixtures. Receive a catalog or place an order by calling 800-NHSAVES3. Find participating lighting retailers by calling 877-366-3749. For more information, contact your electric utility.
- *Energy Star® Appliance & Rebates* – Receive a rebate coupon for a qualified Energy Star® rated appliance (e.g., clothes washers, air conditioners). Contact your electric utility.
- *NH Energy Star® Homes* – Receive rebates or other incentives to help fund the building or renovating of a single or multi-family energy-efficient home. Contact your electric utility.

Public Service Co. of NH

- *HeatSmart* – Receive a discounted rate for electricity in exchange for allowing PSNH to interrupt your electric service for up to four hours at a time in the event of an energy shortage. In order to qualify, you must have an approved, backup heating system installed (e.g., wood pellet stove, wood stove, coal stove, or electric thermal storage).

NH Electric Cooperative

- *SmartStart* - Finance energy efficiency measures on your electric bill.

SAVE MONEY AT TAX TIME WITH THE FEDERAL ENERGY POLICY ACT OF 2005

The Federal Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPAct) was signed into law on August 8, 2005. The EPAct is intended to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, increase conservation and expand the use of clean renewable energy. The law provides tax credits to consumers for installing energy-efficient products or renewable energy measures in their homes. Unlike a tax deduction, which only lowers your taxable income, a tax credit reduces your federal income tax liability dollar for dollar. To view the benefits that are available to you visit www.energytaxincentives.org.

To learn more about federal, state and local incentives for renewable energy use, go to the Database of State Incentives for Renewable Energy website at www.dsireusa.org and click on NH. The NH Office of Energy and Planning, <http://nh.gov/oep/programs/energy/RenewableEnergyIncentives.htm>, is another good resource for local and state incentives.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THOSE IN NEED

Based on a 2005 U.S. Census Bureau estimate there are 1,310,000 people living in NH. Approximately 80,000 households are eligible to receive financial assistance from one or more state or federal programs. Assistance is only available as funds permit and may be granted on a first-come-first-served basis. Some assistance programs related to utility costs are summarized below, according to which entity (e.g., utility or agency) that offers or administers the program. For contact information for any of these entities, please see the last page of this newsletter.

- *Low Income Heating Assistance Program (LIHEAP)* – Qualified households receive assistance for heating costs. For information regarding eligibility and to apply please contact your local CAA.
- *Electric Assistance Program (EAP)* – Qualified households receive assistance for electricity costs. For information regarding eligibility and to apply please contact your local CAA.

Note: The EAP has been redesigned to reflect a growing need in NH. The changes will benefit more households and target more of a benefit to the most in need. These changes went into effect starting October 1, 2006.

- *Neighbor Helping Neighbor* – Qualified households receive assistance for natural gas or electricity costs. For information regarding eligibility and to apply please contact your local CAA.

- *Gas Assistance Program* - Qualified households receive assistance for natural gas costs. For information regarding eligibility and to apply please contact your gas company.
- *Project Care* – Qualified New Hampshire Electric Cooperative members receive assistance for electricity costs. For information regarding eligibility please contact NHEC.
- *Lifeline/Linkup New Hampshire* -
 - Lifeline* - Qualified telephone customers receive a monthly reduction on their residential, local telephone bill.
 - LinkUp* - Qualified telephone customers receive a 50% reduction (up to \$30.00) in the usual cost of installation for local telephone service.
 For information regarding eligibility and to apply, contact your local telephone company or the Public Utilities Commission at 1-800-852-3793 or visit <http://www.puc.nh.gov/Consumer/linkup-lifeline.htm>

Please note that *balanced billing* and *budget billing* are available from most utilities. *Payment arrangements* for customers behind on bills are also available from all utilities. To learn more about your payment options, contact your utility. If you feel you need assistance negotiating a payment arrangement, please contact the Public Utilities Commission Consumer Affairs Department at 1-800-852-3793. The PUC also has Winter Disconnection Rules that provide certain protections from disconnection to residential customers during the winter months. To learn more about the Winter Disconnection Rules please visit <http://www.puc.nh.gov/Consumer/winterdisconnectionrules.htm> or contact the PUC directly.

Contact Information

Community Action Agencies - To locate the number of your local CAA contact the NH Helpline - 1-800-852-3388
 Public Service of NH – 1-800-662-7764
www.psnh.com/Residential/Efficiency/default.asp
 National Grid – 1-800-322-3223
http://www.nationalgridus.com/granitestate/home/energyeff/3_programs.asp
 NH Electric Coop – 1-800-698-2007
<http://www.nhec.com/>
 Unitil – 1-800-852-3339
http://services.unitil.com/ceco/energy_efficiency.asp
 Northern Utilities –1-800-232-0120
www.northernutilities.com/forhome/NHeneraudit.htm
 KeySpan Energy – 1-800-292-2032 for energy efficient programs and 1-800-262-4111 for assistance programs
www.keyspanenergy.com/ps/home/energy/saving_nh_kednh.jsp

Office of Consumer Advocate

Main Number 603-271-1172
 Website: www.oca.nh.gov
Personnel:
 Consumer Advocate:
 Meredith Hatfield 603-271-1174
 Assistant Consumer Advocate:
 Ken Traum 603-271-1176
 Attorney:
 Rorie Hollenberg 603-271-1173
 Utility Analyst:
 Steve Merrill 603-271-1175
 Legal Assistant:
 Christina Martin 603-271-1172

If you have any ideas or suggestions for any upcoming newsletters, or have any comments regarding present or past newsletters, please contact Christina Martin at 271-1172. If you would like to be added to or removed from the distribution list for our newsletters, please contact Christina Martin at 271-1172.

A limited number of copies of this newsletter have been printed. Copying of this document for further distribution to others who may be interested in its contents is welcome.