

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

The Consumer Newsletter of the  
New Hampshire Office of Consumer Advocate  
21 S. Fruit Street, Suite 18  
Concord, NH 03301  
603-271-1172

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## PREPARING FOR WINTER

**Q. How Can I Be Ready for the Cold Season?**  
**A. Energy Efficiency!**

### National Winter Fuel Cost Forecast

Residential space heating expenditures are projected to increase for all fuel types this winter compared to last year. Factors influencing these increases include concerns about crude oil supplies, volatility in crude oil prices, tightness in natural gas markets and a projected slightly colder-than-normal winter season.

Heating oil expenditures by typical Northeastern households are now expected to average about 37% above last winter's levels. Residential prices are expected to average \$1.88 per gallon for the October-to-March period.

Propane-heated households can expect to see increased expenditures of about 26% this winter. Residential prices are expected to average \$1.53 per gallon.

Increased expenditures of 15% are expected for natural gas-heated households. Residential prices are expected to average \$10.86 per thousand cubic feet (mcf).

Residential electricity demand is expected to increase 3.9% in 2005, with the projected average price per kilowatt hour (kwh) of 8.65 cents. This is a slight increase from last year's average of 8.50 cents per kwh.

Source: Energy Information Administration, U.S. Department of Energy

### Local Fuel Costs

<b>Fuel Prices:</b>	<u>November 2003</u>	<u>November 2004</u>
Heating Oil	\$ 1.259/gal.	\$ 2.073/gal.
Propane	\$ 1.569/gal.	\$ 1.989/gal.
Kerosene	\$ 1.519/gal.	\$ 2.334/gal.
Electricity	\$ 0.11949/kwh	\$ 0.11066/kwh
Natural Gas	\$ 1.1171/th	\$ 1.2578/th
Gasoline	\$ 1.586/gal.	\$ 1.980/gal.
Diesel	\$ 1.567/gal.	\$ 2.250/gal.

Source: N.H. Office of Energy and Planning

### New Hampshire Assistance Programs

*Fuel Assistance* – As funds permit, this program provides benefits to qualified households to assist with heating costs. This program is federally funded and administered by the state. It assists with any type of fuel (oil, gas, electric or propane). For information regarding eligibility, please contact your local Community Action Agency. See page 3 for CAA contact information.

\* Fuel assistance benefits are not counted as income when applying for other assistance.

*Electric Assistance Program (EAP)* – This program helps income eligible customers pay their electric bills. Eligible customers receive a discount on their monthly electric bills. The discounts range from 15% to 90%, depending on several factors including gross household income, household size and type of heat. To find out if

you are eligible, please contact your local Community Action Agency (CAA). See page 3 for CAA contact information.

*Neighbor Helping Neighbor* – This program, which is funded by contributions from utility customers, helps income qualified customers pay their electric or gas expenses. For more information, contact your electric or gas utility or your local Community Action Agency.

*Weatherization* – This program helps qualified individuals reduce household energy use and costs by installing energy-efficiency improvements. For more information about this program, contact: Andy Gray, Program Manager, Office of Energy and Planning at (603) 271-2155 or e-mail: [andrew.gray@nh.gov](mailto:andrew.gray@nh.gov).

### **Residential Energy Efficiency Programs**

*Electric* - A variety of “Core” programs exist, serving both residential and commercial and industrial customers. They include programs for new construction, retrofitting existing structures, and rebate programs for selected lighting and appliances.

*Energy Star® Lighting Program* - Residential electric customers who purchase Energy Star® rated light bulbs and fixtures can receive rebate coupons redeemable at participating retailers. A typical Energy Star® rated Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL) lasts up to 10 times longer and uses 75% less energy. Ask your local stores if they offer the coupons.

*Energy Star® Appliance Program* – For a limited time, customers will receive a \$50 rebate coupon towards the purchase of an Energy Star® rated washing machine when purchased at a participating retailer. Energy Star® clothes washers use 35% to 50% less water and 50% less energy per load, and significantly reducing drying time, too.

*Residential Retrofit Program* – Electric customers can receive up to \$2,500 in rebates

and services for qualified energy efficiency improvements.

*Income Qualified Energy Efficiency Program* - Qualified low-income, electric customers living in an apartment or house, either rented or owned, can receive up to \$4,000 in qualifying services (\$6,300 if customers also qualify for the NH Weatherization Assistance Program).

*NH Energy Star® Homes Program* - The NH Energy Star® Homes Program encourages customers to take advantage of the benefits of building or renovating a single or multi-family energy efficient home with rebates up to \$2,500.

Additional details on the “Core” energy efficiency programs may be found by visiting [NHSaves.com](http://NHSaves.com), the web site established by the electric utilities serving N.H., or by calling the toll free number 1-866-266-2420.

*Pay As You Save (PAYS) Pilot Program* - Offered by the New Hampshire Electric Cooperative (NHEC), this program allows certain customers to finance the purchase of approved efficiency devices, appliances, or services on their electric bill. For more information, contact NHEC at 1-800-698-2007 or [www.nhec.coop/pays.html](http://www.nhec.coop/pays.html).

*Gas Energy Efficiency Programs* - Programs common to both Northern and KeySpan include home energy assessment (audit) and weatherization services, high efficiency heating and water heating equipment, Energy Star Homes, and a residential Conservation Services Program. Each utility also offers low income efficiency programs and additional programs not common to both. For specific program offerings and requirements, please contact your utility or visit their website.

- **Northern Utilities:** [www.northernutilities.com](http://www.northernutilities.com)
- **Keyspan:** [www.keyspanenergy.com](http://www.keyspanenergy.com)

## **Community Action Agencies**

The Community Action Agencies are private, non-profit organizations who serve their communities by assisting low-income individuals to meet important individual and family needs, including health, nutrition, housing, employment, and to promote self-sufficiency.

### *Belknap/Merrimack Counties*

[www.bm-cap.org](http://www.bm-cap.org)

- Concord 225-6880    ● Franklin 934-3444
- Laconia 524-5512    ● Meredith 279-4096
- Suncook 485-7824    ● Warner 456-2207

### *Rockingham Community Action*

[www.rcaction.org](http://www.rcaction.org)

- Portsmouth 436-3896/1-800-639-3896
- Salem 898-8435

### *Southern New Hampshire Services (Hillsborough County)*

[www.snhshome.homestead.com](http://www.snhshome.homestead.com)

- Manchester 647-4470/1-800-322-1073
- Nashua 889-3440/1-877-211-0723
- Peterborough 924-2243

### *Southwestern Community Services (Cheshire and Sullivan Counties)*

[www.scshehelps.org](http://www.scshehelps.org)

- Keene 352-7512/1-800-529-0005
- Claremont 542-9528

### *Strafford County Community Action*

[www.straffcap.org](http://www.straffcap.org)

- Dover 749-1334    ● Milton 652-9893
- Rochester 332-3963    ● Farmington 755-9305

### *Tri-County Community Action (Coos, Carroll and Grafton Counties)*

[www.tccap.org](http://www.tccap.org)

- Berlin 752-3248    ● Littleton 444-6653
- Colebrook 237-8168    ● Plymouth 536-8222
- Lancaster 788-4477    ● Woodsville 747-3013
- Lebanon 448-4553    ● Carroll County  
323-7400/1-888-842-3835

## **Renewable Energy Incentives**

State law authorizes municipalities to exempt certain renewable energy installations from property taxation. The PUC's code (900) allows for "net metering," which permits homeowners to receive credit for excess electricity generated from solar cells or wind turbines.

PSNH offers a "Net Energy Billing" option for residential customers with an electricity generator that uses an energy source from solar, wind or water. For more information, contact PSNH at 1-800-662-7764 or [visit www.psnh.com](http://www.psnh.com).

New Hampshire Electric Cooperative commissioned a study that presents information about the Renewable Energy/Distributed Generation Technologies (RE/DGT) that are commercially available, as well as the cost-effectiveness of each application. This study is available at [www.nhec.coop/dgrenewables.html](http://www.nhec.coop/dgrenewables.html). For more information or questions, contact Keith McBrien at (603) 536-8839, toll free at 1-800-698-2007 or email at [mcbrienk@nhec.com](mailto:mcbrienk@nhec.com).

## **Energy Saving Tips!!!!**

Thermostats should be set no higher than 72°F during the day and lower during the evening. During each 24-hour period, you will save about 3% on your heating bill for every 1 that you lower the thermostat. For example, if you lower your thermostat from 72° to 65° at night, you will save another 7 cents for every heating dollar you spend. Set your hot water temperature to 115.°

If you have a dishwasher, check the manual for the temperature recommended by the manufacturer. If you leave for vacation, turn the water heater down. There's no reason to reheat the same water over and over again if you're not going to use it.

Fix leaky faucets and other leaks. One drip can waste up to 48 gallons of water a week. If it's a hot water faucet that's leaking, you're literally sending your energy dollars down the drain!

If you have three dishes to cook in the oven at slightly different temperatures pick the average temperature and cook them together.

Don't put uncovered liquids in the refrigerator; they force the unit to work harder to remove moisture.

Use hot water only for very dirty clothes. Most clothes can be washed in either warm or cold.

Install energy-efficient compact fluorescent lights. They use 75% less energy than regular bulbs.

- ❖ For more energy saving tips, visit the website of the U.S. Department of Energy, Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, [www.eere.energy.gov/consumerinfo](http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumerinfo).

### **Winter Disconnection Rules**

To protect customers of natural gas, electric and steam utilities, the PUC has rules governing service disconnection between November 15 and March 31 (Puc 1204). These rules prohibit disconnection if a customer's arrearage does not exceed a certain amount: \$125 for gas non-heating customers; \$225 for electric non-heating customers; and \$450 for electric, gas and steam heating customers. Additionally, utilities must seek commission approval before disconnecting service of a residential customer known to be 65 years or older. Over and above the winter disconnect rules, the Commission is also authorized to order a disconnection moratorium when there is "an imminent peril to the public's health, safety or welfare." Puc 1203.11

Payment assistance (as described earlier in this newsletter), balanced billing and budget billing are available from most utilities. Payment plans are available from all utilities. To learn more about your payment options, contact your utility. For more information about the PUC's Winter Rules

call (603) 271-2431, toll free at 1-800-852-3793 or visit [www.puc.nh.gov](http://www.puc.nh.gov).

### **Safety Awareness**

Generally speaking, utilities are not responsible for maintenance and repair of wiring, pipes, appliances and other utility-related equipment located within a customer's residence. The condition and capacity of this equipment, as well as a customer's usage patterns will impact the quality of utility service. If you are experiencing problems with your electrical, heating or plumbing system, contact your utility and a qualified professional for inspection and repairs.

### **Holiday Lighting Tips**

The least expensive lights to use for holiday lighting are LED (light emitting diode) lights, which use about 100 times less electricity than regular incandescent lights. Holiday mini-lights use about one-tenth the energy of regular incandescent lights. LED lights last up to 100-thousand hours inside and about half that time outside. You can have 25 strings of LED lights without straining a household circuit.

### **Office of Consumer Advocate**

Main Number . . . . . 603-271-1172  
Website: [www.oca.nh.gov](http://www.oca.nh.gov)

#### Personnel:

Consumer Advocate:  
    F. Anne Ross . . . 603-271-1174  
Asst. Consumer Advocate:  
    Ken Traum . . . . 603-271-1176  
Attorney:  
    Rorie Hollenberg 603-271-1173  
Utility Analyst:  
    Bill Homeyer . . . 603-271-1175  
Legal Assistant:  
    Christina Martin 603-271-1172

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