

Prepare for winter by servicing heating systems

As days become colder, heating systems will be turning on for the first time in months and Central Hudson is reminding customers to stay safe this winter by following a few simple safety tips.

Have heating systems checked professionally, along with checking fittings, burners and performing other adjustments, chimneys and exhaust flues should also be cleared of any obstructions, especially now that leaves are falling. Blockages can prevent flue gases from venting properly, causing a build-up of deadly carbon monoxide gas in the home.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless and odorless gas produced as a by-product of any fuel, including oil, propane, wood, natural gas and kerosene. Exposure can cause many symptoms including sleepiness, dizziness, nausea, loss of consciousness and even death. Be sure your home is equipped with a carbon monoxide detector as a safety precaution to warn of its presence, and those currently using detectors should replace the batteries regularly.

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HEATING COSTS EXPECTED TO INCREASE



Surging demand, slower production lead to energy price hikes

Energy prices are spiking worldwide as demand for fuels like natural gas outpaces production. These price fluctuations have been the most dramatic in Europe and Asia to date, but the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) is alerting New Yorkers to prepare for increases in electric and gas utility bills compared to last year as well.

A recent report by the PSC said that while there is an adequate supply of energy and resources, estimated statewide winter heating bills for households using natural gas could increase by as much as 21 percent compared to 2020. Even with these increases, the U.S. Dept. of Energy (DOE) still estimates that natural gas will continue to be the lowest-cost form of heating fuel throughout the winter months. The DOE estimates an increase of more than 50 percent in heating expenditures for households using propane and more than 40 percent for homes using oil.

“Central Hudson is working with state regulators and monitoring industry

resources regarding energy prices both at home and abroad,” Charles A. Freni, President and CEO of Central Hudson said. “We have long-standing practices in place that help to dampen fluctuations in energy costs and will make every effort to help minimize bill impacts to our customers.”

Energy price increases are the result of several factors including an increase in demand over last year as the global economy continues to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. This spike in worldwide demand is expected to have an impact on domestic storage levels, meaning a colder winter with strong heating demand has the potential to push energy prices higher than the low costs prevalent in recent years.

While forecasted prices are increasing, they remain within the range experienced over the last ten years, the PSC said. According to the DOE, natural gas Henry Hub spot prices peaked at approximately

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EnergyCentral

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Prices: Propane and oil may increase 40-50 percent

\$4.53 per thousand cubic feet in 2014. Projections for spot prices in 2021 are at approximately \$3.77 per thousand cubic feet, which is up from \$2.11 per thousand cubic feet in 2020 by comparison.

This increase in natural gas prices will also have an impact on electric bills as natural gas is now used to produce up to 50 percent of electricity in the state. The PSC estimates that the typical residential electric bill in New York will increase by approximately 13 percent.

Customers pay the prevailing market price for natural gas and electric supply, as utilities purchase energy on their behalf through the wholesale market. To help stabilize natural gas and electric supply costs against fluctuating market prices, Central Hudson uses a number of hedging techniques, such as contracting for a portion of resources at fixed prices and purchasing gas at pre-season prices and placing it into storage. Customers who purchase their energy from an Energy Service Company, or ESCO, should be aware of their service agreements and energy prices heading into the winter months.

Customers can help manage energy costs in various ways, such as implementing energy efficiency measures and exploring their billing options.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Central Hudson offers energy efficiency incentives for homes and businesses, including rebates on high-efficiency natural gas home heating systems, indirect natural gas water heaters, heat pump water heaters and electric heat pump systems. A complete description of



Central Hudson's rebates and programs is available by visiting www.CentralHudson.com and clicking on "Save."

Discounted energy efficiency products with instant savings for Central Hudson customers are available at local participating retailers. Available items include LED bulbs, smart thermostats, advanced power strips, water-saving products and more. For a list of participating retailers visit www.CentralHudson.com, click on the "Save" link at the top of the page, then click on "Residential Incentives."

BILLING OPTIONS

To avoid variations in energy bills, Central Hudson customers may enroll in the Budget Billing program, which divides a household's average annual energy bill into 11 even and predictable monthly payments, with the 12th month's payment adjusted up or down to reflect actual usage and market prices.

Payment assistance options are also available to qualifying customers like the Bill Discount program for income-qualified customers which provides a monthly credit of \$30 per month for gas-heating customers and \$40 per month for electric heating customers. The federally funded Home Energy Assistant Program (HEAP) grants are now available and the new Regular Arrears Supplement program that provides up to \$10,000 in utility arrears assistance to eligible households who are unable to pay their unpaid electric and/or gas utility arrears.

Central Hudson's Clean Energy Marketplace allows customers to save up to 10 percent on their utility bill by subscribing to local clean energy projects at <http://CleanEnergyMarket.cenhud.com>.

For more information, or to learn more about all of Central Hudson's assistance programs, visit www.cenhud.com/account-resources/assistance-programs/. *

Heating: Follow safety tips during winter months

If carbon monoxide is detected, the building should be evacuated, and the cause investigated by a qualified service technician. Occupants should seek medical attention as necessary.

Customers should also be aware of natural gas odors, which are similar to that of sulfur as a result of an added odorant for

easier detection, and remember to follow the advice of Central Hudson's natural gas odor safety slogan, Stop. Go. Let Us Know. Customers who think they smell natural gas should Stop: don't light or use a match, turn lights on or off, use a flashlight, cell phone or telephone, flush or run water, or turn on or off any other appliance or

electric/electronic device; Go: leave the home or building immediately; and Let Us Know: by moving to another location and calling Central Hudson as soon as possible at (800) 942-8274, or emergency responders at 911. Natural gas odors detected outdoors or in public places should also be reported. *