

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING ENERGY COSTS

- 🔗 Learn what's driving natural gas prices and what Washington Gas is doing to help customers
- 🔗 Plan ahead
- 🔗 Use energy wisely and safely
- 🔗 Consider purchasing alternatives
- 🔗 Apply for energy assistance

A GOOD PRODUCT IN GREAT DEMAND

Natural gas is clean, comfortable, efficient, and reliable. For those reasons, it is in great demand. The majority of American households heat with natural gas, and manufacturers and other industrial customers account for one-third of its use in the U.S. As demand has risen, access to new domestic sources has lagged. The result: a tightening supply of natural gas that continues to cause price fluctuations — especially during times of peak use.

What's the outlook? Energy experts and analysts predict more of the same for the coming heating season. Weather plays a role as well, influencing how much natural gas consumers use.

The best way to meet this challenge is to prepare now... before the heating season begins. Learn how Washington Gas works to minimize the impact of higher natural gas prices and what you can do to manage energy costs.

WASHINGTON GAS'S ROLE

Natural gas is a commodity — a product that is traded on the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX). As with other goods and services bought and sold in a free market economy, supply and demand for natural gas influence the price.

Because Washington Gas is a regulated utility, it passes directly to sales customers (those who buy gas from Washington Gas and not from an energy supply company) the price it pays for the natural gas they use. There's no markup or discount — it's a direct "pass through" cost.

Washington Gas makes every effort to purchase an affordable and adequate supply to meet customers' needs. Included among the steps it takes to accomplish this and protect customers from price volatility are the following:

- ☐ purchasing natural gas in the summer months for delivery into storage to take advantage of potentially greater price stability;
- ☐ utilizing fixed price contracts and other gas delivery agreements to help limit price fluctuations;
- ☐ advocating for and participating in fuel assistance programs to help those in need (see *Washington Area Fuel Fund* below);
- ☐ providing year-round information about energy efficiency, purchasing choices and payment plans to help customers manage energy costs.

BUDGET PLAN

The Washington Gas Budget Plan allows customers to spread the cost of heating over 12 months and provides greater certainty about the monthly payment. The company calculates an average monthly payment based on historical natural gas usage — adjusted for normal weather — and projected gas costs. Washington Gas reviews your account periodically to keep the monthly estimate on target. The payment is adjusted, if necessary, to avoid a large correction at the end of your budget year. Consider enrolling at www.washingtongas.com, or call the automated **Special Services Line** at **703-750-7944**.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

☐ For efficiency and safety, have a qualified, licensed heating professional perform an annual inspection and maintenance of your natural gas heating equipment — before the heating season begins. This service also should include your water heater and should cover inspection of all pilots, burner chambers, venting systems and thermostats. The heating system air filter should be cleaned or changed, and all chimneys, flues and vents should be checked to make sure they are clear and in proper operating condition. Call **1-888-941-HEAT** (941-4328) for a natural gas contractor referral, or visit www.washingtongas.com and click on *Find a Natural Gas Contractor*.

- ☞ Pick up extra furnace filters for the heating season. Furnaces consume less energy if they “breathe” more easily, so change the filter at least once a month in the fall and winter. Let your monthly bill be a reminder.
- ☞ Turn down the temperature on your hot water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. (The comparable setting for hot water heaters without numbers should be *Warm* or *Low*). This should improve efficiency and prevent scalding accidents.
- ☞ Wash full loads of clothes and dishes. Taking showers instead of baths can help to reduce hot water use too.
- ☞ Caulk, insulate and weatherstrip before the first frost. The most common places where air escapes include doors, attics, windows, plumbing penetrations and electrical outlets.
- ☞ For guidance on solving your energy problems, visit www.eere.energy.gov, the Department of Energy’s site, and take the virtual home energy tour. More tips are available by clicking on *Energy Information* at www.washingtongas.com. View our energy efficiency video — produced in cooperation with the Alliance to Save Energy — at our site or at www.ase.org.

CUSTOMER CHOICE

Take advantage of the opportunity to shop for the best price on your natural gas purchase. You can buy from Washington Gas or from one of a number of qualified energy supply companies that compete for your business. Energy supply companies can offer price incentives that could result in savings for you. As with any other important purchase, you’ll want to shop around and compare prices and services.

No matter which company sells you natural gas, Washington Gas delivers it to you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week — safely and reliably. Click on *Customer Choice* at www.washingtongas.com for lists of suppliers and other details.

Washington Gas’s customers in and around the **Frederick, Maryland** area should call **301-662-2151** for information related to energy assistance, billing, payment plans and other customer services. Customers who live in the **Shenandoah Valley area of Virginia** should call **540-869-1111**.

ENERGY ASSISTANCE

Eligibility for most government energy assistance programs depends on family size, income and the type of heating fuel. If you have difficulty paying your energy bills and believe you may qualify for assistance, call the agency for your area:

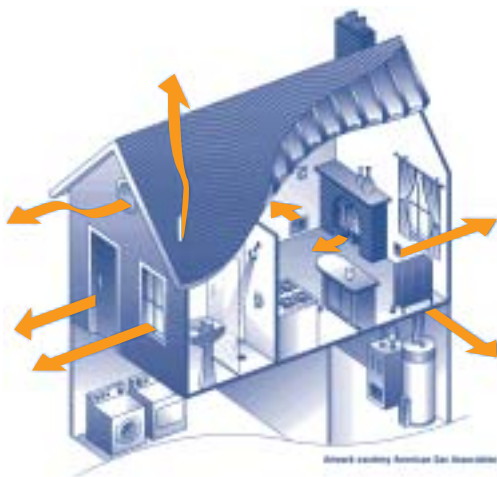
DC: Energy Office at **202-673-6750**.

MD: Department of Human Resources at **1-800-352-1446**.

VA: Statewide Human Services Information and Referral Line at **1-800-230-6977**.

The **Washington Area Fuel Fund** (WAFF), founded and supported by Washington Gas, is available to provide assistance from January through May of each year. It offers help when an individual or family has exhausted all other means or may not qualify for government fuel assistance. The Salvation Army administers the fund and answers questions at **1-888-318-WAFF** (318-9233).

Call Washington Gas before it becomes impossible to pay your bill. The sooner you call, the better chance the company has to assist you with a payment solution.



Keep energy costs from going through the roof. . . under the door, out the window, through the outlets and up the chimney. Insulate, caulk and weatherstrip!



Washington
Gas

www.washingtongas.com

703-750-1000

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