

# CenterPoint Energy Offers Tips to Prepare for Higher Energy Costs

## Begin Energy Conservation Planning Now

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HOUSTON, Jul 30, 2008 (PrimeNewswire via COMTEX) -- CenterPoint Energy

CNP estimates that based on current natural gas prices and assuming normal weather conditions, the average Arkansas residential customer's winter bill which was \$130.53 last winter will rise to \$161.36, a 24 percent increase. However, customers should be prepared to see increases of up to 45 percent over last year depending on weather and market conditions. Commercial customers should also expect to see similar increases which will vary depending on the amount of gas consumed.

"We want our customers to be prepared for higher energy costs this winter and to begin thinking about ways to reduce consumption and make their homes more energy efficient," said Walter Bryant, division vice president of regional operations for CenterPoint Energy. "Natural gas continues to be a great energy value when compared to other energy choices like electricity, fuel oil or propane. The best way to manage higher prices is to learn how to lower consumption, prepare your home and enroll now in CenterPoint Energy's Average Monthly Billing program."

CenterPoint Energy has secured ample gas supply for the upcoming heating season through a diversified portfolio based on reliability, reduced price volatility and reasonable price to meet our customers' needs. The cost of gas on a customer's bill makes up about 70-80 percent of the bill, typically changes twice annually depending on market prices, and is passed on directly to customers at the same price the company pays to acquire it. By acting now, customers can reduce energy use and lower energy bills. The best way to manage higher gas prices is to prepare now by following these tips:

- \* Enroll in Average Monthly Billing to spread heating costs more evenly throughout the year and avoid high winter bill peaks.

**Furnace:** A furnace is the largest natural gas consumer, and makes up about 47 percent of your natural gas bill.

- \* Lower your thermostat to 68 degrees when you're home and 65 degrees when you're not. By lowering your thermostat 10-15 percent for eight hours a day, you can save up to 10 percent a year on your heating costs. Installing a programmable thermostat can help

you automatically control your heat usage. Add on extra layers of clothing to keep warm.

- \* Change your air filters monthly. A dirty filter restricts airflow and can increase the operating cost of your furnace by as much as 10 percent. A good reminder is to change the filter each time you receive your natural gas bill.

Water heater: The water heater is the second-largest gas consuming appliance making up about 43 percent of your bill.

- \* Set the water heater temperature at 120 degrees and wrap water heater pipes. Lowering the temperature to 120 degrees from 140 degrees and insulating your pipes can save you up to 10 percent on your water heating costs.

Other appliances: Although they consume less natural gas, you can still maximize their efficiency.

- \* Run your washing machine, dish washer and gas dryer only with full loads.

Make your home more airtight and keep cold air outside:

- \* Seal leaks around doors, windows and other openings, such as pipes or ducts, with caulk or weather-stripping. The most common places where air escapes in homes are floors, walls, ceilings, ducts, fireplaces, plumbing penetrations, doors, windows, fans, vents, and electrical outlets.
- \* If it has been a while, consider adding more insulation in your attic.
- \* On sunny days, open draperies and blinds to let the sun's warmth in. Close them at night to insulate against the cold air outside.