

Mainlines

DECEMBER 2008 / JANUARY 2009

A newsletter for the customers of the Holyoke Gas & Electric Department



Happy holidays!

Your December bill reflects **an extra 10% holiday discount on gas and electric services**, granted by the Holyoke Gas & Electric Department Commission. This discount does not apply to customers who are participating in an economic development incentive offer.

Economic development incentives include the First-Time Homeowner program, the Economic Development discount program and Large Industrial Contract Rate customers. Bills must be paid by discount date to receive discounts.

Low Rates Save HG&E Customers Money Year-Round!

The average Holyoke homeowner saved **nearly \$400** on their utility bills in 2008, when compared to residents of surrounding towns that are served by an investor-owned utility.

In addition to this special 10% holiday discount, HG&E has offered you some of the lowest utility rates in New England throughout 2008.


In 2009, HG&E will strive to continue providing you with the lowest possible energy rates and most reliable services, accompanied by customer service which exceeds all expectations.

We thank you for the opportunity to serve you over the past year and offer our best wishes to you and your family for a healthy and prosperous 2009.

Savings estimate based upon an average residential customer with electric consumption of 500 kWh per month, and annual gas consumption of 1376 CCF. Total amount includes all discounts.


Electric Rate Comparison

December 2008 - Residential customer consuming 500 kwh per month. Amounts shown include all discounts and use the fixed default generation supply price.

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------|--|
| HG&E | \$53.83 |  includes an extra 10% holiday discount ! |
| National Grid | \$93.31 | serving Northampton +73.3% |
| Western Mass Electric | \$94.28 | serving Springfield +75.1% |

Natural Gas Rate Comparison

Average Annual Bill - November 2008 - April 2009
Residential customer consuming 179 CCF/month. (1376 CCF Annual Consumption) Amounts shown include all discounts.

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------|--|
| HG&E | \$259.24 |  includes an extra 10% holiday discount ! |
| Berkshire Gas | \$269.86 | serving Pittsfield +4.0% |
| Baystate Gas | \$280.50 | serving Springfield +8.2% |

Protect your family from Carbon Monoxide poisoning

Whether you heat your home with oil, natural gas, propane, coal or wood, your heating system can produce carbon monoxide (CO) if it is not working properly, or if it is inadequately vented. CO is also produced from internal combustion devices such as cars and small gasoline engines. Carbon monoxide is odorless, colorless and tasteless, but very toxic. Signs indicating the presence of carbon monoxide in the home include stuffy, stale or smelly air, very high humidity or soot coming from a fireplace or heating system.

What are the symptoms of CO poisoning?

The symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning are often confused with those of the flu, and the highest incidence of poisoning occurs during the flu season.

Symptoms include headaches, dizziness, nausea, unclear thinking, shortness of breath, weakness, vision problems and loss of muscle control. High concentrations of carbon monoxide can lead to unconsciousness, brain damage or death. However, a victim may not experience **ANY** of these symptoms, or only one or a few symptoms. You should suspect the presence of carbon monoxide if symptoms tend to disappear when you leave your home.

What should you do if you suspect the presence of Carbon Monoxide in your home?

- ▶ **Open the windows and doors**
- ▶ **Contact HG&E at 536-9335 (24-hours a day) or a licensed heating contractor immediately for an emergency inspection.**
- ▶ **If carbon monoxide is detected, seek medical attention immediately.**

This information has been prepared by the Northeast Gas Association.

WINTER HEATING HELP

HG&E Credit Department

413-536-9300 (option 2) / www.hged.com

If you think you may fall behind on your energy bills this winter, please contact us now to discuss a payment plan.

Valley Opportunity Council

413-552-1548 / www.valleyopp.com

Local agency who administers the federally-funded LIHEAP and HEARTWAP fuel assistance programs.

Springfield Partners for Community Action

413-263-6500 / www.springfieldpartnersinc.com

Local agency who administers the federally-funded WAP weatherization assistance program.

Distrigas / Citizens Energy

1-866-GAS-9918 / www.citizensenergy.com

Provides up to \$150 per heating season to natural gas customers who have exhausted their fuel assistance benefits or those who are ineligible to receive federal fuel assistance.

Citizens Energy Oil Heat Program

1-877-JOE-4-OIL / www.citizensenergy.com

Eligible households who are facing financial hardship are allowed a one-time delivery per heating season of 100 gallons of home heating oil for free. There are no strict income limits and no citizenship requirements.

Council of Churches of Greater Springfield

413-733-2149 / www.councilofchurchesgs.org

The Emergency Fuel Fund program provides financial support to individuals and families to help them purchase heating fuel during the winter months. Funds are limited and priority is given to senior citizens, first-time callers, and families with young children.

Salvation Army Good Neighbor Energy Fund

800-262-1320 / www.magoodneighbor.org

Provides up to \$275 per heating season to needy families who otherwise don't qualify for fuel assistance programs. (60%-80% of State Median Income Level)

New Income Eligibility Levels for Aid Programs!

Fuel aid qualification is now based upon 60% of the state median income. Thousands of people statewide who have not qualified for fuel aid in past years may now be eligible to receive benefits!

2008/2009 Fuel Aid Program Eligibility Chart

LIHEAP / WAP Programs - Massachusetts

| # of People in Household | OLD PROGRAM Maximum Annual Household Income | NEW PROGRAM Maximum Annual Household Income |
|--------------------------|---|---|
| 1 | \$20,800 | \$27,876 |
| 2 | \$28,000 | \$36,454 |
| 3 | \$35,200 | \$45,031 |
| 4 | \$42,400 | \$53,608 |
| 5 | \$49,600 | \$62,186 |
| 6 | \$56,800 | \$70,763 |
| 7 | \$64,000 | \$72,371 |
| 8 | \$71,200 | \$73,979 |

If your gross household income falls under the limits shown in this chart, you may qualify for fuel assistance payments and a possible discount on your telephone bills.

For information on how to apply, call your local Fuel Assistance office:

Valley Opportunity Council
300 High Street • Holyoke, MA 01040
Call: 413-552-1548



This information is presented as a public service by HG&E.