

Mainlines

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2006

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

New State Law Requires Carbon Monoxide Detectors

Installing a carbon monoxide (CO) detector in your home has always been a good idea... but as of March 31st 2006 it's also Massachusetts State Law.

Massachusetts will become the ninth state in the country to require the installation of these life-saving devices. As of March 31st, any residential dwelling that have enclosed parking or equipment such as boilers, furnaces, or hot water heaters powered by natural gas, propane, coal, oil or wood will be required to have a working CO detector.

Homeowners can meet the requirements of this law through the installation of an inexpensive battery-powered or plug-in CO detector. These detectors are available at major home improvement, hardware and discount stores. The cost for a CO detector is about \$30.

Enforcement of the state's carbon monoxide law, like the state's smoke detector law, will be carried out by local fire departments during home inspections prior to the sale or transfer of property.

More information about Carbon Monoxide safety can be found on our website at: www.hged.com/safety

Help a needy family keep warm this winter



The Salvation Army Good Neighbor Energy Fund helps needy families with up to \$275 in fuel assistance per winter season. **Contact them at (800) 262-1320 if you need help or to learn how you can make a donation to the Good Neighbor Energy Fund.**

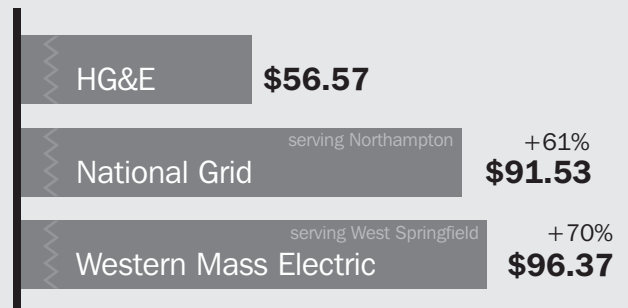
Melanoma Fundraiser

Come join "Sailing for Success" (a melanoma fundraiser) for their forth-annual Irish night out. On Saturday March 18 2006, 7pm at the Holyoke Elks Lodge.

Delicious food, exciting raffles and the best Irish music in town provided by Dicey Riley. Come see what all of your friends are talking about. Tickets are \$25 and can be obtained by calling Joanne Roy at (413) 536-2772.

Electric Rate Comparison

Residential customer consuming 500 kwh per month. Totals include all discounts and use the variable default generation supply price.



▶ **HG&E electric customers pay up to \$40 less per month than their neighbors in Northampton and West Springfield!**

Notice of Electric Rate Adjustment

Due to the soaring wholesale natural gas prices, electric wholesale prices have increased over 46% since last winter (November to present). Most other utilities have already, some as early as November, increased rates by as much as 50%. Although HG&E has been able to avoid much of the wholesale risk due to its hydroelectric generation assets, we have still been exposed to the extreme spot market prices to some degree.

In order to keep pace with these costs, the Purchased Power Adjustment effective with this billing reflects an approximately 4.8% increase in the electric rate, which accounts for HG&E's increased wholesale costs. We fully recognize that this adjustment will not be welcome news for our customers as most are already struggling to pay historically high natural gas prices.

HG&E has, and will continue to make best efforts to keep our rates as low as possible. If you have questions about our budget plans or energy conservation programs, please call a Customer Accounts Representative at (413) 536-9300.

Insulate your home from high heating costs this winter.



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TIPS FOR HOME WEATHERIZATION

- 1 Electric outlets let cold air into the house. Install special foam gaskets (available at hardware stores) behind electric outlet and switch plate covers on all exterior walls. Also use special insulating plugs in all outlets that are not being used.
- 2 Keep warm air from leaking outside by sealing your windows and doors with caulking and weather-stripping. It's important to seal and weatherize before adding insulation.
- 3 Close your fireplace damper once a fire is safely out. Keeping the damper open lets warm air flow right out of the house just as if you had left a window open.
- 4 Heat only the area you are in. Use a blanket to curtain off hallways and rooms without doors to keep heat in the occupied area. This low-cost fix can make a big difference in your heating costs and comfort.

TIPS FOR HOMES WITH ELECTRIC HEAT

- 5 If you have electric heat, put a thermometer next to your thermostat. Don't rely on the thermostat's "comfort zone" setting to establish temperature. (it can be off by as much as 10%)
- 6 For homes with electric baseboard heating, consider investing in new thermostats that can hold a steady temperature. Older baseboard heater thermostats can create very high swings in temperature and are notoriously inaccurate.
- 7 Portable heaters can save you money only if you use them to heat small areas for a short period of time. Your furnace is a much more efficient source of whole-home heating.
- 8 Do not use your oven to heat your home. Not only is it inefficient and costly, but it could present a dangerous situation for you and your family.

watch for 8 more tips in next month's HG&E bill