

# Energy issues

energy + time

www.washingtongas.com • 703-750-1000

September-October 2007

## Best Ways to Manage Energy Costs This Winter

**W**e'll take care of providing safe and reliable natural gas service while you prepare for the cold weather ahead. Follow these steps to stay safe, warm and energy wise:

### 1. Have Your Heating System Inspected and Maintained.

Have a qualified, licensed natural gas contractor perform a thorough inspection of your heating system, including the furnace, water heater, all pilot and burner chambers, venting systems and thermostats. Call today... before contractors become too busy. Clean or replace air/furnace filters at least once a month during the heating season.

### 2. Join the Budget Plan

Customers who qualify can take advantage of the opportunity to spread the cost of winter heating over the entire year and lessen the impact of typically higher winter energy bills. Washington Gas calculates your average monthly payment based on historical natural gas usage, adjusted for normal weather, and projected gas costs. Periodically, the company reviews your account to determine that its monthly estimate is on target. Each month, your bill will show actual gas usage and bill amounts, along with budget installments, so you can review the information. At the end of your budget year, Washington Gas either credits (or reimburses) you, or bills you the additional amount owed. For more information, visit [www.washingtongas.com](http://www.washingtongas.com). Call 703-750-7944 to enroll.

### 3. Save Energy TODAY

There are so many easy, no-cost/low-cost steps you can take right now to save energy and better manage costs.

- Set your thermostat comfortably low in the winter.
- Consider installing a programmable thermostat.
- Turn your hot water heater down to *Warm* or *Low*, never more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Caulk and weatherstrip windows and doors that leak air.
- Install rubber gaskets behind outlet and switch plates.
- Wash full loads of laundry and dishes.
- Always look for the *ENERGY STAR* label when buying new appliances.

#### More help:

- Energy efficiency video: [www.washingtongas.com](http://www.washingtongas.com).
- U.S. Department of Energy: [www.eere.energy.gov](http://www.eere.energy.gov) or call 1-877-337-3463.
- Alliance to Save Energy: [www.ase.org](http://www.ase.org).

### 4. Consider Your Energy Choices

Who will you buy your gas from this winter... Washington Gas, which is your regulated utility, or one of the licensed energy supply companies that compete for your business? Shop and compare. Go to [www.washingtongas.com](http://www.washingtongas.com), click on *Customer Choice*, and scroll down to your area. A list of energy suppliers is included in the *Q&A* sections.

In response to Virginia regulations, Washington Gas provides a list of customers' names, addresses and gas usage history to licensed energy suppliers so they may contact customers about energy choices. If you wish to have your name removed from the list, call 703-750-4504 or 1-800-660-7899 from 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday - Friday, September 12 - October 15, 2007. Hearing impaired customers should use the 711 relay service. ☎

## Emergency Preparedness

**W**ashington Gas does not recommend that you turn off natural gas service to your home as part of an emergency plan. The company's distribution system is designed so gas to an entire neighborhood — or several neighborhoods — can be isolated and shut down for repairs. If service is shut off to your home for any reason, never attempt to restore it yourself. Call Washington Gas at 703-750-1000. ☎

## Light The Night

**W**ashington Gas volunteers dedicate thousands of hours to community service to promote health, education and the environment. Each year they participate in the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's *Light The Night Walk* to support the fight against blood cancers. A full schedule of walks being held throughout the Washington metro area in October can be found at [www.lightthenight.org](http://www.lightthenight.org) or call 703-960-1100. ☎

## Call 8-1-1 Before You Dig

**H**ave underground utility lines in your yard or work area located before you begin to dig or excavate, no matter how big or small the project is. Failing to do so could result in property damage, or worse... serious injuries or fatalities. An easy call to **8-1-1** will start the process of having the underground utilities located and marked with bright safety paint and/or flags. Call at least two full business days, excluding weekends and holidays, before your project is scheduled to start. ☎



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

## Super Safety Tips

**K**now the physical symptoms of carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning, which may include dizziness, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, headache, ringing in the ears, blurred vision, stinging eyes and fainting. CO is colorless, odorless and toxic and is released when fossil fuels — such as oil, wood and natural gas — don't burn completely because of improperly maintained appliances, blocked vents and chimneys. If you suspect CO poisoning, leave the building or area immediately and call **911**.

- The Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends putting CO detecting alarms outside the bedrooms in each separate sleeping area. Locate smoke alarms on each level of the house and inside every bedroom. Check batteries on alarms monthly and change them at least twice annually.
- Never use your stovetop or oven to heat your home. It could result in CO poisoning and fire.
- If you use a space heater, keep combustibles at least 3 feet away. Turn it off when sleeping or leaving the room. ☎

## ENERGY STAR Sales Tax Holiday — October 5-8

Virginians will be exempt from paying the 5 percent sales tax on *ENERGY STAR* (energy efficient) qualified products costing \$2500 or less. For more information, visit [www.dmme.virginia.gov](http://www.dmme.virginia.gov). ☎



## Gas Pipe Maintenance

**T**he natural gas pipes up to your home, and including your gas meter, are owned by Washington Gas, and we inspect and maintain them regularly. The pipes on the other side of the meter throughout your home belong to you. Monitoring and maintaining them are your responsibility, whether they are visible or not. Have them checked periodically for corrosion or leaks and repaired by a qualified, licensed natural gas contractor if any unsafe condition is detected. ☎

## Washington Area Fuel Fund

**T**his energy assistance fund pays for all types of fuels to heat the homes of those in the Washington area who have nowhere else to turn. For more than 20 years, our caring customers and many others have donated more than \$18 million dollars to provide warmth to 215,000 of our neighbors. The Salvation Army administers the fund, and Washington Gas pays those costs so that 100% of contributions go to help those in need. Visit [www.waff.salarmydc.org](http://www.waff.salarmydc.org) to learn more and donate. Call **1-888-318-WAFF** for help.

## Energy Assistance Contacts

**Virginia Energy Assistance Program:** The state offers assistance to supplement the payment of energy bills for eligible residents. To reach your local social services office, call the statewide **Human Services Information and Referral Line** at **1-800-230-6977** or visit [www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/benefit). Call **1-540-662-8960** for information about weatherization assistance, including the installation of energy-savings measures for low-income households. ☎

**Lose your payment envelope? The Washington Gas billing address is P. O. Box. 9001036, Louisville, KY 40290-1036. (Does not apply to Shenandoah.)**

**Reminder to our Shenandoah Valley area customers:** Continue to call your local Shenandoah office at **540-869-1111** or **800-566-7436** for information related to natural gas leaks, emergencies, other safety concerns, energy assistance, billing concerns, and other customer services. ☎