

# NEWS

Vol. 14 No. 3 October-November 2001

## Having difficulty paying utility bill?

If you're finding it difficult to keep up with your utility bill, please call us right away. We will work with you to set up a payment that works with your budget. Call **449.8092**.

## Security plan

Our security plan for natural gas and water operations was implemented the morning of September 11, following the World Trade Center tragedy. We are working with all local, state and federal authorities. Our water is safe to drink. If it ever is not safe to drink, we will notify the public via the news media.

## Chloramine update

The water treatment change to chloramines, planned for December 1, 2001 has been re-scheduled for Fall 2002. At that time chloramines will be added during the water treatment process to reduce disinfection by-products. The change will provide better-tasting water and better position us to meet future drinking water standards.

## Thank you

Thank you for voluntarily reducing outdoor water use during the dry spell in August. Until we receive the federal permit to build a third water treatment plant and get the plant on-line, you will be asked to conserve water and may see additional restrictions.

## Wise use of energy

Industry analysts estimate customer-owners will pay 30 to 40 percent less for natural gas this winter than last winter, due to increased availability of natural gas, more gas in storage and a return to normal weather. However, wise use of energy will lower your utility bill even more.

1. Have your heating system and chimney inspected every year. Properly-operating appliances lower utility bills and help prevent carbon monoxide from escaping into your home.
2. Set your thermostat at 65 degrees in winter. You can lower it another five degrees or so at bedtime, or when you'll be away for any length of time. (*Note: Older adults may want to raise the thermostat to prevent hypothermia.*)
3. Clean or replace furnace filters once a month or as needed.
4. Replace an older furnace with a high-efficiency natural gas model. It can lower heating costs 30 percent or more.
5. Insulate, weather-strip and use storm windows and storm doors. Caulk around doors and windows.
6. Keep the fireplace damper closed unless a fire is going. An open damper is like having a 48-inch window wide open during the winter; it allows warm air to go right up the chimney.
7. Check ducts for air leaks. Look for sections that should be joined but have separated, and look for obvious holes. If you use duct tape to repair and seal your ducts, look for tape with Underwriters Laboratories (UL) logo to avoid tape that degrades, cracks and loses its bond with age.
8. Clean warm-air registers. Make sure they are not blocked by furniture, carpeting or drapes.
9. Keep drapes and shades on south-facing windows open during the day to allow sunlight to enter your home. Close them at night.

For more tips to save energy and lower your utility bill, call us at **554.6666** for a free copy of "**Energy Savers: Tips for Saving Energy and Money at Home.**" The booklet also is available on the Internet ([www.eren.doe.gov/consumerinfo/energy\\_savers](http://www.eren.doe.gov/consumerinfo/energy_savers)).

Also check out these websites:

American Gas Association  
([www.aga.org](http://www.aga.org))

Nebraska Energy Office  
([www.nol.org](http://www.nol.org))



1723 Harney St • Omaha NE 68102

website: [www.mudomaha.com](http://www.mudomaha.com)

e-mail: [customer\\_service@mudnebr.com](mailto:customer_service@mudnebr.com)

Your customer-owned utility

## U.S. energy policy needs all of the below

The lack of a national energy policy was a significant factor in last winter's run-up in energy costs. At the urging of the Bush Administration, the U.S. House of Representatives in August passed the "Securing America's Future Energy (SAFE) Act. It awaits Senate consideration. A national energy policy should include all of the following:

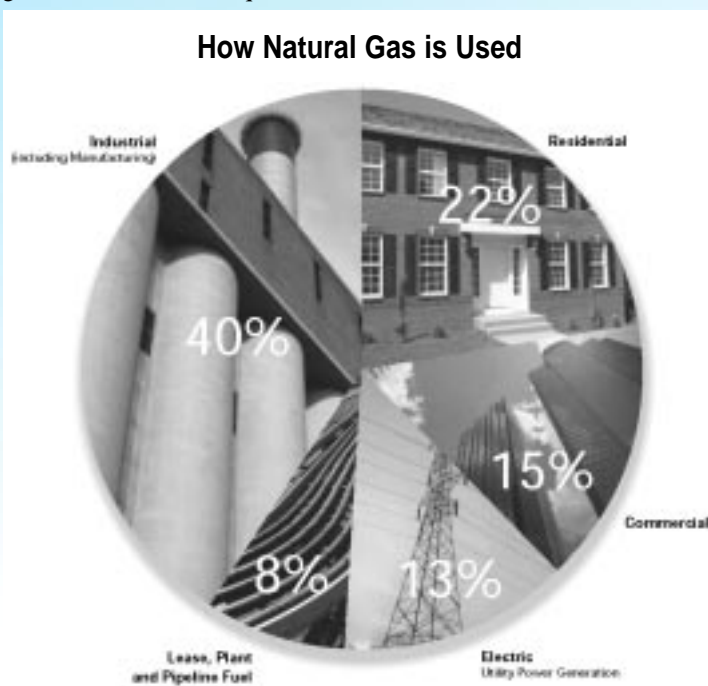
**Increased natural gas supply.** With current natural gas resources stretched, particularly through its increase use for electric generation, new supplies must be added to meet the current and future needs of customers.

**Conservation.** Natural gas supplies are projected to last 60 years, however all traditional fuels—coal, oil, natural gas and nuclear power—are finite resources. Conservation is needed to preserve what remaining energy resources we have until alternate sources are developed.

**Alternative Energy.** The U.S. energy policy should encourage the use and development of viable renewable alternative energy supplies. The government should support and fund research to find and improve alternative energy sources.

**Environment.** A national energy policy cannot ignore the environment or environmental issues, particularly those related to oil and gas production and to electric power generation.

**Natural gas use.** Demand for natural gas to generate electricity is one of the major factors impacting gas markets. Knowing that gas supplies are limited, the use of natural gas for base load electric generating plants, even those using combined cycle electric generation, should be questioned.



Source: U.S. Department of Energy and American Gas Association

Current technology combined cycle electric generation is at best 40-50 percent efficient. Natural gas furnaces exceed 90 percent efficiency.

That means for every home heated with electricity generated by natural gas combined power plants, two homes could be heated with natural gas fired heating systems.

### **Electric power generation.**

Electric power should be generated with coal, nuclear power or renewable alternatives. There are more nuclear power and coal reserves than natural gas reserves in the U.S. Electricity consumers should pay to address environmental issues associated with electric generation from coal and nuclear power.

Since natural gas is a clean-burning fuel, it should be conserved and readily available for residential use.

**Price Stability.** In a free market system, price stability is the most difficult issue to address. Price controls do not encourage conservation or resource development.

Price volatility has the greatest impact on residential customers who have no choice when it comes to heating. Large volume customers have the ability to choose the fuel they use.

The residential customer should pay a fair price and not be subject to the extreme volatility caused by large volume customers.

## What is carbon monoxide (CO)?

Carbon monoxide is a gas that can be produced by incomplete combustion when carbon-based materials are burned—wood, propane, charcoal, natural gas, oil, gasoline and kerosene. CO mixes freely with the air we breathe. It has no odor or color, however some components of combustion do have an odor and may indicate a potential carbon monoxide problem.

To avoid CO problems, make sure your heating system, whether it's natural gas, oil, propane or wood, is properly installed and vented, in good working order, and inspected every year by a licensed heating contractor.

**If anyone shows symptoms of CO or if someone is overcome by CO, call 911 immediately.**

### When does CO become a problem?

According to the U.S. Office of Safety and Health Administration, carbon monoxide becomes a problem when it builds up in your home and the concentration rises to more than 50 parts per million for eight hours or more. As the concentration rises, so does the danger.

At high levels, carbon monoxide is deadly. It combines with hemoglobin—the red component of your blood which transports oxygen to your cells—and prevents oxygen from being circulated. Because they take in less air, older people, young children, people with heart and respiratory problems and small pets are particularly susceptible.

### CO symptoms

CO symptoms are flu-like: Headaches, dizziness, vomiting or nausea, weakness and tightness of the chest. Be suspicious if all members of your family share the same symptoms and the symptoms clear up when you're outside the house. If symptoms persist, see a doctor.

### Should I buy a CO detector?

A carbon monoxide detector/alarm can provide added protection, however they are not substitutes for proper use and upkeep of appliances and heating systems.

If you buy a detector, be sure it has the Underwriters Laboratory label and a loud alarm. Install detectors according to the manufacturers instructions.

The Consumers Product Safety Commission recommends that every home have at least one detector for each floor of the home.

The Underwriters Laboratory recommends placing detectors within hearing range of each sleeping area. Place them near, but not directly above, combustion appliances such as furnaces and water heaters, near fire places or in the garage.

Do not place detectors:

- Within five feet of kitchen stoves and ovens;
- Near areas where household chemicals and bleach are stored.
- Near open windows or doors as weather conditions may affect the sensors.

Prolonged rain, dense fog or high levels of humidity and heavy smoke also may cause detectors to alarm.

Detectors may be placed near the floor or near the ceiling since carbon monoxide has nearly the same density as air.

Smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors protect against different hazards, therefore one is not a substitute for the other.

See these websites for more information:

- [virtual.clemson.edu/groups/FieldOps/Cgs/carbon.htm](http://virtual.clemson.edu/groups/FieldOps/Cgs/carbon.htm)
- [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov)

---

## Board meetings

9 A.M., November 7,

December 5, January 2

## Committee meetings

8:15 A.M., October 26,

November 30, December 28

1723 Harney St., Omaha  
For an agenda, call 449.8153.

## Why is the cost of gas lower this Fall?

**R**esidential customer-owners will pay 34 cents per therm of natural gas in October, compared to 69 cents per therm in October 2000. This is the lowest price for the fuel since February 1999. Why the dramatic drop in price?

Nationwide, utilities have more gas in storage to use on the coldest winter days than they did in the beginning of the last heating season. In addition, producers re-invested money they made last year into exploration and production.

The natural gas bill you receive from us has two parts:

- The price we pay for the gas from the producer, which passes directly to you without added fees. We anticipate these prices will be 30 to 40 percent lower than last winter.
- The base rate, the cost to provide natural gas (such as transporting the gas on interstate pipelines, system maintenance, customer service). This rate has not changed since 1992.

Another reason natural gas prices are lower is that the price of oil is down. Businesses with the ability to switch between fuel oil and natural gas do so depending on which energy source is less costly.

Our analysts also anticipate winter temperatures will be normal or possibly slightly above normal.

We caution, however, that the price of gas could go up if:

- Oil prices increase;
- There are colder than normal winter temperatures particularly early in the season in other parts of the U.S., or
- If the economy turns around and businesses began using more natural gas.

During the last 18 months, natural gas prices have gone up and down pretty dramatically. The market has worked well to balance supply and demand (e.g., increased number of wells drilling for natural gas; reduced industrial demand).

However, consumers could face another roller coaster in future years if Congress fails to pass a national energy policy bill that will provide a "blueprint" for the production, transportation and use of natural gas and other forms of energy.

*Energy gift certificates for all occasions. Buy them in any amount to give to friends and relatives. Your gift can be anonymous. Stop by our office, 1723 Harney St., to buy certificates.*

*Added convenience:*

**Now pay your M.U.D. bill at any Hy-Vee store in the metro area.**

*(printed on recycled paper)*

**Gas, water emergencies**

**554.7777**

**Meter Reading Hotline**

**449.8161**

**Customer Service**

**554.6666**

## Learn from the experts

The M.U.D. Employee Speakers Bureau offers entertaining and informative programs on natural gas and water for groups of 12 or more.

All programs are presented at no charge. Call **449.8156** or e-mail [customer\\_service@mudnebr.com](mailto:customer_service@mudnebr.com). Please make reservations at least two weeks in advance.

## Amana oven recall

Maytag has asked consumers to immediately discontinue use of the broil/self-clean modes in Amana Big Oven gas ranges sold between May 2000 and July 2001.

During the broil/self-clean modes, the range can emit high levels of carbon monoxide. In addition, the temperature of the storage drawer can become extremely high, presenting the risk of burn to consumers.

Recalled range models include (*numbers found inside storage drawer*):

ACF3315A (T) (K): Serial# 0005 through 0103 (first four digits of the 10-digit.

ACF3335A (W) (C) (B) (S): Serial# 0005 through 0107 (first four digits of the 10-digit.

ACF3375A (W) (C) (B) (S): Serial# 0006 through 0107 (first four digits of the 10-digit.

If you have questions, call Amana, 800.266.3535 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday-Friday, for an in-home inspection and free repair.