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Heating costs projected to surge as natural gas prices, demand climb

Credit: Nick Graham

Middletown Energy Center is a natural gas-fired power plant in Middletown. The average cost of home heating is estimated to increase from $907 last winter to $976 this winter, a 7.6% increase, according to projections from the National Energy Assistance Directors Association. Natural gas prices expenditures are projected to rise from $639 to $693, an 8.4% increase. NICK GRAHAM/STAFF

By Eric Schwartzberg

Heating a home is projected to cost consumers more this winter season and too add on more bad news, colder temperatures are forecasted in Ohio this winter compared to previous years..

The average cost of home heating is estimated to increase from $907 last winter season to $976 this year, a 7.6% increase, according to projections from the National Energy Assistance Directors Association. Natural gas prices expenditures are projected to rise from $639 to $693, an 8.4% increase.

The cost of heating homes with electricity is rising primarily due to the ongoing high costs of maintaining and upgrading the power grid, increasing natural gas prices, which is a key fuel used in electricity generation, and growing electricity demand from data centers, according to the NEADA.

In the Midwest, the average cost of heating a home is estimated to rise from $820 to $938 this winter, a 14.4% increase, according to NEADA projections. Natural gas prices expenditures are projected to rise from $600 to $698, a 16.4% increase.

Mark Wolfe, NEADA's executive director, said there's a reason why natural gas and other home heating sources are projected to be more expensive in the Midwest than other parts of the nation this winter.

"We use NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) estimates for temperature projections," Wolfe said. "We're expecting it to be colder (in) the Midwest, so it's not just that the cost of natural gas has gone up (and) the cost of electricity is going up, it's also you're going to be using more of it."

Metzger said while it's not known exactly what natural gas and other heating prices will be, sharing estimates is "more to be prepared" for the oncoming season.

"It could be colder in your region, and … you'll need to use more natural gas and electricity, which will also be more expensive," he said.

CenterPoint Energy handles the transmission and distribution of natural gas in the Dayton region, but is not itself a natural gas supplier. It recently said that while natural gas customers will see an incremental increase, "natural gas prices are expected to be approximately 10% below the peak, increased prices seen three years ago during the 2022-2023 heating season."

The average customer paid $112 per month for natural gas service during the 2024-2025 heating season for a five-month total (November to March) of approximately $558, CenterPoint said. Actual bills vary with home size and age, number of gas appliances, thermostat settings, insulation and weather.

Base rates for natural gas bills are under review by the state and could increase, if approved, according to Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel.

Natural gas and electricity have been rising at more than twice the rate of inflation over the past year, according to the August Consumer Price Index released in late September.

The biggest impact is on families who use electricity to heat their homes, with costs expected to increase from $1,093 to $1,205, a 10.2% leap, according to NEADA. Natural gas prices are also on the rise. NEADA forecasts an increase in the average cost from $639 to $693, largely driven by higher exports of liquefied natural gas

CenterPoint Energy said a customer's natural gas supplier and corresponding price per unit of gas can significantly influence bill amounts.

"Customers can choose a fixed price that won't fluctuate over the winter months," the company said. "Since natural gas represents nearly half of customers' bills during the winter months, now could be a good time for customers to explore supplier pricing options."

CenterPoint said its customer communication campaign to promote its support programs in Ohio ahead of the winter heating season is designed to help eligible customers manage rising energy costs through resources like energy efficiency tips and bill assistance.

The initiative comes in response to forecasts from the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), which predict higher residential natural gas bills across the Midwest due to increased fuel expenditures, despite stable national pricing, the company said.

"Given seasonal forecasts, including EIA's, of an increase to the cost of natural gas we are concerned about the potential for rising fuel prices to impact our customers' bills this winter," CenterPoint Senior Vice President Mike Roeder said in a statement. "While CenterPoint doesn't control the price of natural gas or determine how fuel costs impact customer bills, we are committed to supporting our customers, especially those who may need help paying their energy bill."

CenterPoint suggests encourages customers to explore its various support programs to avoid service disruptions and better manage winter energy expenses. Among the available programs are:

- Choice Program, which allows customers to select their natural gas supplier
- HEAP and the HEAP Winter Crisis Program for income-eligible households
- PIPP Plus, which caps monthly payments at 5% of household income.

Miami Valley Communications Council in August unveiled a new natural gas aggregation program. MVCC acts as the certified governmental aggregator for 18 local communities.

The program is set to provide residents and small businesses with a fixed supply rate of $7.195 per MCF (thousand cubic feet) from Archer Energy.

Participating area communities include Brookville, Centerville, Eaton, Englewood, Fairborn, Germantown, Huber Heights, Kettering, Miamisburg, Monroe, Moraine, New Lebanon, Oakwood, Trotwood, Troy, Union, Vandalia and West Carrollton.

Organizers said the program offers "price stability in an unpredictable natural gas market."

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