

DoE Sees 32% Rise in Average Winter Heating Bill

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Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Winter heating bills will be a third to a half higher for most families across the country, with the sharpest increases expected for those who heat with natural gas, the Energy Department forecast Wednesday. The department said natural gas users could expect to pay an average of \$350 more during the upcoming winter compared to last year, an increase of 48 percent. Those who heat their homes with fuel oil will pay \$378 more, or 32 percent higher than last winter.

NOAA's National Weather Service said there is a 60 percent chance of warmer than normal weather in the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, north Texas, northern New Mexico and southern and eastern Colorado. States adjoining that area, plus Washington, Oregon, Alaska and Hawaii also have a chance of being warmer than usual. Other areas could be warmer or cooler than usual but no area was singled out to be especially cold.

A month ago, the EIA said natural gas prices could jump as much as 71 percent in the Midwest, where four of every five homes are heated by gas. It made no such specific assessment this time, but acknowledged that a colder-than-normal winter in the Midwest would produce significantly higher costs.

For some low-income families the sharp jumps could mean choosing whether to eat or keep warm, energy experts and *advocacy* groups fear.

Heating costs for the average family using fuel oil in the Northeast is projected by the group to be as much as \$1,867 for the winter heating season, an increase of \$605 over last winter, and \$915 more than two years ago.

In the Midwest, where natural gas heats 79 percent of all homes, according to AGA, the winter heating costs are projected to soar to \$1,568 for the season, an increase of \$611 over last winter, according to Wolfe.

1. Assuming your winter heating bill in 2004 was \$220 a month at the projected level of increase; about how much more a month may one anticipate paying?
2. At this present rate of increase who will be paying more – a home heated with natural gas or fuel oil? Explain in complete sentences.
3. What impact may the 60 percent chance of warmer than normal weather have upon heating bills?
4. If there were 9,750,000 homes throughout the Midwest, approximately how many are *not* heated by gas?
5. What adjustments may need to be made by families; however, specifically, by students at home to accommodate this increased expense? Explain.
6. In the passage above, explain at least three ways using the “**Reading Across The Curriculum**” poster simplifies understanding of the material. Be specific.
7. Using contextual clues, explain the meaning of the italicized word *advocacy* above.
8. In paragraph form, explain three legitimate and educational purposes behind The Daughtry Times.