

HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

Ways To Reduce Energy Bills All Winter Long

(NAPSA)—According to the National Weather Service, the winter of 2005-2006 is expected to be the coldest on record. That means, in addition to frigid temperatures, consumers will also be getting a chill when they open their heating and energy bills.

Jeffrey Mayer, an expert on natural gas, electricity and energy purchasing, pricing and deregulation, offers a number of steps consumers can take to control their natural gas and electricity bills:

- Consult an energy marketer—These professionals work with consumers to determine their best energy choices based on usage, climate, home size and other factors.

- Conservation—For every degree you lower your heat in the winter, you'll save up to five percent on heating costs. Wear warm clothing and set your thermostat to 68 degrees or lower during the day and evening. Setting the thermostat back to 55 degrees or off at night or when leaving home for an extended time saves five to 20 percent of your heating costs.

- Insulation—Don't let energy slip out of doors, windows and attic vents. Make sure your house is properly insulated. If your home has the proper insulation for your climate, you can reduce the amount of energy needed to heat and cool your home. Get it checked by a professional and make sure it's up to par.

- Be a smart shopper—Through a process called deregulation, many states allow you to buy natural gas and electricity from a provider other than your

Did You Know?

- The coldest city in the U.S., based on normal daily temperature, is Barrow, Alaska, with 4.1 degrees Fahrenheit. Average January temperatures for some of America's major (and colder) cities include: Albany, N.Y.: 22; Bismarck, N.D.: 10; Burlington, Vt.: 18; Chicago, Ill.: 22; Duluth, Minn.: 8; and Detroit, Mich.: 25.
- Gasoline prices have increased more than 132 percent in the last year and natural gas prices have increased more than 126 percent.
- After electricity, natural gas is the most volatile commodity on the planet. Price changes in excess of 80 percent per year are common.
- In the U.S., 22 states allow for the deregulated purchase of natural gas and it is expected that more will sign it into law in 2006.
- If every household in the United States lowered its thermostat six degrees over a 24-hour period, America would save the equivalent of more than 570,000 barrels of oil.



utility company. You may be able to lock in a fixed rate for your natural gas and electricity, allowing you to know what to expect each month when you open your utility bill. Much like a fixed-rate mortgage, a fixed-rate utility bill helps you stabilize your budget to prepare for the heating season.

For more information on how to control energy costs, contact an Energy Consultant at 1-800-785-4373 or www.mxenergy.com.