



BERKSHIRE GAS

THE BERKSHIRE GAS COMPANY
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Dear Customer,

With the winter heating season just ahead, we wanted to let you know what you can expect with regard to natural gas supply prices. We also wanted to pass along some of the options available to help you manage any change in natural gas supply prices or increased use should there be colder-than-expected weather.

Natural Gas Supply and Prices

Based on current winter price forecasts, Berkshire Gas heating customers can expect that their monthly bill will be approximately 18% higher for this heating season, as compared to last year, barring any unforeseen changes in the energy markets.

Current natural gas commodity price projections for this upcoming winter are almost double those of last winter. While we have no control over the actual price of natural gas, we do employ aggressive natural gas purchasing strategies throughout the year in an effort to provide our customers with reliable supplies at the best possible price.

A Note About Weather

Your monthly heating bill is affected by the price of natural gas and the amount of natural gas you use to heat your home or business. Your consumption of natural gas could be higher or lower than previous winters depending on the severity of the weather – the colder the weather, the more natural gas you are likely to use, particularly for heating.

It is important to note that last winter weather was six percent warmer than normal, on average. Colder than normal winter temperatures would likely result in overall higher heating costs, due to the need for increased usage to keep your home warm. The opposite would be true should actual winter weather prove to be warmer than normal.

The current pandemic may continue to impact the amount of time you will be spending at home and/or working from home. The resulting increased usage for home heating will also increase your monthly bill.

How You Can Save Energy and Money

We are committed to working with our customers to help manage energy use and costs.

- **Control Your Heating Costs** - You can control your heating costs by using energy wisely and making sure that both your natural gas-fired equipment and your home are as efficient as possible. Taking some simple steps, like turning down your thermostat whenever possible, can go a long way toward helping you manage your energy costs.

(over, please)

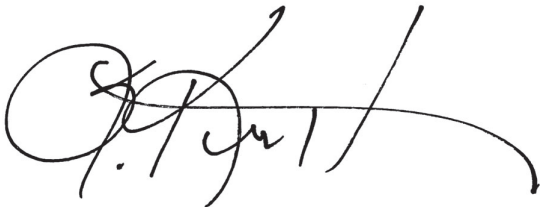
- **Budget Billing** - The best way to manage your energy costs is through our Budget Billing Program. Budget payment plans allow you to spread your energy costs evenly over 12 months. To learn more and find out if you are eligible, please call our Customer Care Center at (800) 292-5012.

- **Payment Assistance Information** - With this letter, we have provided information on our payment options and payment assistance programs. I encourage you to read these documents and take action right away.

- **Energy Efficiency** - Enclosed you will find important information about the energy efficiency programs we offer and energy saving tips for your household.

Natural gas is the affordable choice to cleanly and efficiently heat our homes now and for years to come. We appreciate your business and look forward to continuing to serve your natural gas needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sue Kristjansson', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Sue Kristjansson
President and COO

Energy Saving Tips from Berkshire Gas

NO-COST WAYS TO SAVE ENERGY & MONEY

- Water heaters are the second highest source of energy usage in the home. Use cold water when washing clothes.
- Take a five-minute shower instead of a bath to reduce hot water use.
- Do only full loads when you use the clothes washer or dishwasher to avoid wasting hot water.
- Check the temperature on your water heater. It should be set at “warm,” or a thermometer held under running water should read no more than 120 degrees. If it’s higher, lower the temperature on your water heater thermostat.
- If you have a warm air heating system, check the furnace filter each month, and clean or replace it as needed. Dirty filters block air flow through your heating equipment, increasing your energy bill and shortening the equipment’s life.
- Set your heating thermostat to 55 degrees or lower while you’re away and also at bedtime.
- Close the fireplace damper when not in use. Consider installing glass doors on the fireplace.
- When cooking, keep the lids on pots.

LOW-COST WAYS TO SAVE ENERGY & MONEY

- Install energy-saving, low-flow showerheads and sink aerators to reduce hot water use.
- Seal up your windows and doors with caulking and weatherstripping to ensure that you’re not wasting energy on heat that escapes through leaks to the outdoors.
- Install a wireless enabled, or smart thermostat, and enjoy the convenience of controlling your home’s temperature from anywhere. Or, customize a schedule and let it adjust the temperature automatically for you.
- Install foam gaskets behind electric-outlet and switch-plate covers.
- Duct tape works well on lots of things, but it often fails when used on ductwork! Use mastic (a gooey substance applied with a paintbrush) to seal all exposed ductwork joints in areas such as the attic, crawlspace, or basement. Insulate ducts to improve your heating system’s efficiency and your own comfort.
- In the winter, storm windows can reduce your heat loss by 12% - 33%. As an alternative, you can improve your windows temporarily by installing inexpensive plastic sheeting on the inside.

WEATHERIZING YOUR HOME

can reduce your heating needs by up to 30%

- The easiest and most cost-effective way to weatherize your home is to air seal and add insulation in the attic. If you have less than R-22 (approximately 6 inches), you could benefit by adding more. Most U.S. homes should have between R-38 and R-49 attic insulation.
- Insulating your walls will improve the comfort of your home and reduce your energy bills dramatically. Remember to insulate the walls or ceiling of your crawl space and/or basement.
- Air sealing before you insulate will reduce air leakage in your home by using products like caulk and expanding foams to fill holes and cracks, mainly in the attic and basement.
- See reverse to learn about how our Residential Energy Efficiency Programs can help you weatherize your home with incentives between 75% and 100%.

IMPROVE YOUR HEATING SYSTEM

Up to half of your energy bill goes to heating

- Turn your heat down every night and whenever you leave home. Better yet – install a wireless enabled thermostat and save about 15% of your heating costs each year. Programmable thermostats automatically adjust the temperature for you based on a set schedule.
- Replace your water heater with the most efficient one possible. Consider an indirect water heater (a super-insulated storage tank connected to a boiler.)
- Replace your boiler or warm air furnace with the highest efficiency model possible. Changing out heating equipment with ENERGY STAR® Certified models can cut your annual energy costs by 20 percent.

IMPROVE YOUR WINDOWS

- If your home has only single pane windows, consider replacing them with ENERGY STAR® labeled windows.
- Alternatively, storm windows can reduce your winter heat loss by 12 - 33%.
- Check for drafts coming from doors and windows, then caulk and weather-strip them as necessary.

Residential Energy Efficiency Programs* 1-800-944-3212

HOW CAN BERKSHIRE GAS HELP YOU?

As a proud sponsor of the Mass Save® program, Berkshire Gas wants to help make our customers' homes energy efficient. If you heat your home with natural gas, we will help pay for eligible energy-saving measures that will increase your home's efficiency and comfort, while saving you money.

Home Energy Services (1-4 units)

Whether you are a homeowner, a tenant, or a landlord, scheduling a no-cost Home Energy Assessment (HEA) is the first step in identifying energy efficiency opportunities. After your HEA, you'll get a custom energy report outlining recommendations, next steps, and rebates and incentives. (note: virtual assessments are available as well)

You may qualify for the following:

- No-cost air sealing
- 75% (or more) off approved insulation improvements
- Landlords get 100% off approved insulation improvements when all eligible units participate
- Up to \$2,750 toward heating system replacements
- \$150 rebate off the purchase of an ENERGY STAR® certified clothes washer
- The opportunity to apply for 0% HEAT Loan financing for eligible upgrades
- Discounted wireless thermostats with free installation

Visit masssave.com/hea for more information.

Multi-Family (5 + units)

If you own, manage, or reside in a residential facility with 5 or more units, or are part of a condo association, Berkshire Gas has exciting savings opportunities for you too. We will implement a whole-building approach and offer a comprehensive energy-savings plan to reduce energy costs, increase comfort, and enhance your property's value. No-cost energy-savings measures and generous incentives are available! Learn more at masssave.com/multifamily.

Income Eligible Program (1-4 units)

Income eligible customers (renters included) may qualify for a 100% contribution from Berkshire Gas on the installed cost of energy-saving improvements. Visit masssave.com/eligible to learn if you qualify, or call 866-537-7267 and select option 2.

Low Income Multi-Family (5 or more units)

Generous contributions on energy efficiency upgrades recommended during a site assessment are available for multi-family properties based on the income eligibility of the majority of its tenants. Visit leanmultifamily.org for more information.

HIGH-EFFICIENCY HEATING & WATER HEATING EQUIPMENT REBATES

1-800-232-0672*

To apply online, please visit masssave.com/rebates. Or, to download an application, please visit berkshiregas.com/smartenergy. Rebate offers listed below apply to equipment installed between 1/1/2021 and 12/31/2021. For information on available rebates on equipment installed in 2020, please call 1-800-232-0672.

Heating Equipment

Natural Gas Furnace (w/ECM)

Efficiency Requirement

≥ 95% AFUE

New! Available Rebate

\$1,000

≥ 97% AFUE

\$1,250

Natural Gas Furnace (w/ECM) and On-Demand Water Heating

≥ 97% AFUE

\$ 950

Natural Gas Hot Water Boiler

≥ 90% AFUE

\$2,000

**outdoor reset controls required*

≥ 95% AFUE

\$2,750

Natural Gas Condensing Boiler w/On-Demand Water Heating

≥ 95% AFUE

\$2,400

**outdoor reset controls required*

Water Heating Equipment

ENERGY STAR® Certified Storage Water Heater

Efficiency Requirement

Medium Draw ≥ .64 UEF, High Draw ≥ .68 UEF

Available Rebate

\$100

ENERGY STAR® Certified Condensing Gas Water Heater

≥ .80 EUF

\$500

Indirect Water Heater

Must be attached to natural gas boiler

\$400

ENERGY STAR® Certified On-Demand Tankless Water Heater

≥ .87% UEF

\$700

Controls and Thermostats

After-Market Boiler Reset Control

Efficiency Requirement

Attached to a natural gas forced

Available Rebate

\$225

** may not be combined with boiler rebate*

hot water boiler

Programmable Thermostat

New equipment only

Up to \$25

Wireless Thermostat

New equipment only

Up to \$100

*All programs subject to change without notice. Rebate cannot exceed the retail price, not including tax. AFUE = Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency rating. ECM = Electronically Commutated Motor. UEF = Uniform Energy Factor. Updated program information can be found at berkshiregas.com under the "Smart Energy" menu.

Payment Assistance Programs

BERKSHIRE GAS PROGRAMS

Payment Methods

Berkshire Gas provides a variety of payment methods for the convenience of our customers including mail, online debit/credit card or bank account payments and automatic payment options.

Auto Pay

“Auto Pay” is a free service that allows customers the convenience of having the monthly gas bill automatically deducted from their checking or savings bank account twenty (20) days from the billing date. It’s a check-free, stamp-free and worry-free way to pay your gas bills. To learn more, call our Customer Care Center at (800) 292-5012 or visit www.berkshiregas.com and click on the link to “Help With Bill” under the “Account” menu.

Budget Payment Plans

Budget payment plans allow customers more affordable payments by averaging higher winter bills with lower summer bills. This helps to spread the cost of winter heating over the entire year. To learn more and find out if you are eligible, please call our Customer Care Center at (800) 292-5012.

Installment Payment Plans for Overdue Balances

Customers may enter into an installment payment plan to pay overdue charges. Berkshire Gas will allow a minimum of four months for the customer to pay overdue balances. A down payment may be required. To learn if you are eligible for a payment plan and the specific details of the plan, please call our Customer Care Center at (800) 292-5012.

Low-Income Discount Rate

Discounted non-heating and heating charges are available to low-income residential customers that:

Qualify for any means-tested public benefit program; OR

Are eligible for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) or its successor program; AND the household’s gross income meets the income guideline.

Please call our Customer Care Center at (800) 292-5012 for more information.

Financial Hardship

Financial Hardship is certified when residential customers meet the income eligibility guideline for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

Please call our Customer Care Center at (800) 292-5012 for more information.

Protection from Disconnection

Protection from disconnection of gas service due to non-payment is provided when:

All members of the household are sixty-five years of age or older. Gas service may be disconnected with the approval of the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (MDPU), OR

The customer cannot afford to pay the overdue utility bills because of financial hardship; AND

- The customer heats the home by natural gas. Protection from disconnection of service is only provided during the winter period of November 15 to March 15.
- A member of the household has a physician-certified serious illness.
- All adult members residing in the household are sixty-five years of age or older; AND a minor child resides in the home.
- A child under twelve months of age resides in the home.

Please call our Customer Care Center at (800) 292-5012 for more information.

Berkshire Gas Residential Arrearage Management Program (RAMP)

RAMP provides financial assistance to eligible low-income residential customers with active accounts that are past due. Forgiveness of the past due balance is extended “one-time” only. The RAMP program forgives past due bills for qualified low-income residential customers that have a household income within 60% of the state median income and have active accounts that are three hundred (\$300) dollars and sixty (60) days or more past due. Program participants receive forgiveness credits to their past due account once all program requirements have been met. (Some restrictions may apply.)

To apply November 1 to April 30: Customers approved for fuel assistance are automatically eligible and referred to Berkshire Gas for the RAMP program by the local community action agency.

To apply May 1 to October 31: Customers must submit proof that they are a recipient of a state means tested assistance program.

OTHER FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE RESOURCES

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

LIHEAP is a federally funded program to assist eligible low-income households pay a portion of home winter heating bills. LIHEAP is available to both homeowners and renters. Eligibility and payment amount is determined by family size and gross annual household income.

Heating Emergency Assistance Retrofit Task Weatherization Assistance Program (HEARTWAP)

This grant program provides low-income, fuel assistance-eligible homeowners with assistance for:

Heating system repair/replacement services

Heating system cleanings

Free energy, health and safety audit

Free attic and/or side-wall insulation, air sealing, weather-stripping and other winterization energy repairs

LIHEAP and HEARTWAP are available through your local community action agency:

COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

Berkshire Community Action Council (BCAC)
Pittsfield (413) 445-4503, North Adams (413) 663-3014

Community Action Pioneer Valley
Franklin County (413) 774-2318, Hampshire County (800) 370-0940 or North Quabbin (978) 544-5423

Good Neighbor Energy Fund (GNEF)

The Good Neighbor Energy Fund provides electric, gas, or oil heating assistance to Massachusetts residents that meet program income guidelines. This program is funded by Massachusetts utilities and utility customers.

The Good Neighbor Energy Fund is administered by the Salvation Army.

Amherst (413) 586-5243, Pittsfield (413) 442-0624,
North Adams (413) 663-7987 or Greenfield (413) 773-3154

Families at Risk of Homelessness

The Berkshire and Franklin County Regional Housing Authorities assist families at risk of homelessness or that are experiencing a housing crisis in which they are unable to meet their household expenses (i.e., rent, mortgage, utility bills, etc.) The County Housing Authority will assess the family needs and refer to available community programs and resources that can provide financial assistance, including the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program. Clients must meet all eligibility requirements and income guideline.

Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority
(413) 499-1630 ext. 100

Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority
(413) 863-9781

Hampshire County (HAP, Inc.) (413) 233-1603, or
(800) 332-9667 ext. 1603, or TTY (413) 233-1699

Massachusetts renters having trouble covering rent and/or utility payments may qualify for assistance through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program (ERAP). The program can pay for up to 18 months of arrears or up to 18 months of prospective rental assistance, or a combination, for costs accrued after the start of the pandemic. Additionally, ERAP can cover up to \$2,500 of overdue utility bills for renters that became due after the start of the pandemic.

Apply through below link or call 211

<https://www.mass.gov/applying-for-rental-assistance-in-massachusetts-to-avoid-eviction>

HELPFUL ENERGY EFFICIENCY LINKS

Mass Save, www.masssave.com

This site provides current information on all Massachusetts' gas and electric utility energy efficiency programs, rebates and generous incentives.

Energy Star, www.energystar.gov

Alliance to Save Energy, www.ase.org

National Energy Foundation, www.nef1.org

United States Department of Energy, www.energysavers.gov

Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy,
www.eere.energy.gov/

ONLINE HOME AUDIT TOOLS

Energy Savvy, <https://berkshire.energysavvy.com>

Provide some basic information about your home and get a no-cost home energy profile in less than five minutes.

