

NPU you!



A community newsletter
for the customers of

**Norwich
Public Utilities**

NPU takes steps to address rising energy costs

Persistent inflation across the United State and around the world continues to impact every aspect of daily life and every industry in the global economy.

NPU is not immune from these economic realities. The price of the electricity and natural gas that we purchase for our customers continues to increase, and like every other utility company in the United States, NPU is working to manage these increases.

Electricity: NPU purchases its electricity from the Connecticut Municipal Electric Energy Cooperative (CMEEC). To provide stability in our rates, CMEEC purchases electricity through short-, medium- and long-term contracts. Without this 'hedging' strategy, NPU and its electric customers would have been exposed to an additional \$13 million in costs for the coming winter, which would result in an increase of 68% in the largest component of our customers' bills each month.

Natural Gas: NPU purchases natural gas for our customers through a similar hedging strategy; however, instead of transmission lines to move electricity, we must purchase capacity on pipelines that bring natural gas into New England from Pennsylvania, Texas, and the Gulf of Mexico. In 2014, NPU made an investment in additional pipeline capacity to allow us to secure lower-priced natural gas for our customers. This additional capacity will save our customers \$2.4 million this winter and helping our customers avoid increases of more than 30%.

Gross Receipts Tax on Natural Gas: Earlier this year, NPU worked very closely with our State Legislators to exempt our purchases of natural gas from the State's Gross Receipt's Tax. This proposal was included in the most recently passed State Budget and will save our customers approximately \$975,000 a year.

Our utility rates include a Purchased Power Adjustment (PPA) and Purchased Gas Adjustment (PGA) that pay for the purchase of the electricity and natural gas used by our customers. NPU uses our Rate Stabilization Funds (electric) and cash reserves (electric and natural gas) to help us manage the fluctuation in our energy costs.

All of these elements are part of customer bills each month – and are critical to help us provide stable rates for longer periods of time. Without a PPA and PGA, our rates would increase and decrease – sometimes significantly – each month. This would create unease for both our customers and our overall financial operations.

For more than two years, NPU has worked to secure and provide direct financial assistance for at-risk customers through a variety of avenues, programs and partnerships. This assistance includes:

- Our Special Payment Arrangement (SPA) program helped approximately 1,500 customers avoid \$1.2 million in late payment fees
- More than \$300,000 was provided to NPU customers participating in our Matching Payment Program
- We facilitated the payment of more than \$2 million in support from TVCCA to help approximately 2,000 customers
- We secured and processed more than \$310,000 in support through the State's UniteCT program for 340 customers
- We secured nearly \$50,000 from Operation Fuel to help 65 customers
- We worked with the City to secure more than \$75,000 in support through the federal ARP program.
- As a result of the advocacy of Congressman Joe Courtney and his Norwich office, we worked with the City to provide \$116,662 in support for 252 customers through Community Development Block Grant program.

Natural Gas Safety: Removing snow from meters

It is important to keep the area around your natural gas meter free from snow so that fire departments and other emergency response agency personnel have access to it in case of an emergency shut-off situation.

When removing snow around gas meters:

- Make sure you know the exact location of your meter before you get started.
- Maintain a safe distance between gas meters and shovels, snow blowers, and other equipment while shoveling.
- NEVER push snow against gas meters, gas piping, or appliance vents and make sure all vents are free of snow or other obstructions.

- NEVER pile snow on top of gas meters, gas piping, or appliance vents.

All natural gas customers should be aware that gas meters that are buried in deep snow or damaged by snow removal equipment could begin to leak. Gas meter leaks are a potentially hazardous situation.

Customers are encouraged to report any problems with their meters to NPU's gas emergency line at 860-887-7207. If there is a natural gas odor present, exit the premises and call 911 right away. Natural gas has a rotten egg-like odor.

10 tips

to winterize your home:

Get your home ready for the winter weather by making your home more energy efficient:

1. Caulk around windows to keep warm air from escaping and cold air from entering. Even if you have done this in the past, caulking needs to be replaced periodically.
2. Replace weatherstripping around doors. If you can see light around the edges of your exterior doors, an investment of a few dollars to install weatherstripping can save you money each month.
3. If you have older windows and doors, adding storm windows and doors can also help you save money on heating costs. A more economical measure would be to install plastic film over windows.
4. Use heavy drapes and rugs to keep rooms warmer and add an insulation layer on wood or tile floors.
5. Change the filter in your furnace. Dirty filters cause furnaces to run harder, wasting fuel. Be sure to get your furnace or boiler serviced annually for maximum efficiency.
6. Programmable thermostats can make it easy to control temperatures in your home, especially when the home is not occupied.
7. Lower the thermostat when everyone is sleeping, and use additional blankets if necessary.
8. Dress appropriately by wearing cold weather clothing indoors such as sweaters and sweatshirts to keep warm, rather than turning up the thermostat.
9. Keep your water heater set at no higher than 120° degrees.
10. Sign up for a free home energy audit from NPU. It's easy -- schedule an audit at your convenience by calling Lantern Energy at 877-878-3006 or completing an online form at <https://www.lanternenergy.com/schedule-an-assessment/>

If you need assistance paying your utility bills, there are resources available to help. Contact these agencies for more information or assistance:

- Norwich Human Services - 860-823-3778
- TVCCA - 860-425-6681 or visit <https://www.tvcca.org/energy-assistance/>
- Operation Fuel - 860-286-0656 or visit <https://operationfuel.org/>

A minute with the Mayor:

Get more engaged in our community with Envision Norwich 360



Mayor Peter Nystrom

The City of Norwich is a unique place – we're known for a lot of our history, and also our vibrant and multi-cultural community. We're definitely a city and we still have the feel of a small town in many ways.

And now, despite the complexity and challenges of engaging in the operations of our city, there is a simple way for more of our residents to share their ideas and opinions with our municipal government.

Since October, the City of Norwich has been utilizing a community engagement tool known as Envision Norwich 360 that I believe can be a helpful and effective way for public officials and our residents to interact. Not everyone has the ability, time, or patience to attend a City Council meeting, and Facebook conversations can veer off into any number of irrelevant, personal or petty distractions.

Envision Norwich 360 provides Norwich residents with a place and a means to voice their opinions, share their ideas and perspectives, and help your elected and appointed officials make Norwich a better place to live, work, and play.



See for yourself by visiting www.envirnonorwich360.com.

While the Envision Norwich 360 site has some similarities with Facebook, it is more organized and provides opportunities for focused discussions. The site provides links to information on current initiatives but also has a place to share ideas. Recent suggestions range from a new movie theater or grocery store to ideas on bringing more and better housing to Norwich.

The site is managed by a small number of officials from the City and the Norwich Community Development Corporation (NCDC). I visit the site regularly and enjoy reading the ideas and perspectives from my community.

A good idea can come from almost anyone at any time, and I know there are a lot of very smart, committed, and creative people in the Rose City. Do you have a new approach to an old challenge in our city? Is there a different way to look at an issue that might be holding Norwich back? The Envision Norwich 360 site is an easy and effective way to share your thoughts and ideas. NCDC will be hosting workshops to introduce the public to this important new tool in the New Year; it is my hope that more and more of our residents will engage with their City government – and each other – in 2023 and beyond.

Please take a few minutes to learn more about www.envirnonorwich360.com.

Winter Fire Safety Tips from the Norwich Fire Marshal's Office

With recent price increases in home heating fuel, fire departments are anticipating an increase in the use of alternate heating methods, which if used unsafely can lead to serious property damage or worse. In an effort to prevent accidental fires, the Norwich Fire Marshal's office has provided a few tips on heating safety for the winter season.

Smoke Alarms

- Install smoke alarms on each level of your home including the basement and inside and outside of every bedroom.
- Test your smoke alarms once a month.
- Change the batteries twice a year, the same time you adjust your clock.



Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- Where there are fuel burning appliances in the home, Carbon Monoxide detectors should be installed on each level of your home and outside of sleeping areas.



- When the alarm sounds leave the building and call 911. Tell the dispatcher if you feel ill such as headaches, or drowsiness. DO NOT reenter the building until instructed to do so by the fire department.

Portable Heaters

- When using electric space heaters, make sure to have at least 36 inches of empty space between the heaters and anything which could burn like curtains, papers, and furniture.
- Be sure your heater has a tip-over shut off feature.
- Plug electric heaters directly into outlets. DO NOT use extension cords or plug strips.
- Turn off heaters when leaving the house or sleeping.
- Unvented fuel fired portable heaters such as kerosene or propane are illegal in apartment buildings.
- DO NOT use your oven or range to heat your home. This is a safety hazard which could cause a build-up of toxic fumes.



- DO NOT use charcoal indoors. It can give off lethal amounts of carbon monoxide when burned.

Fireplace or wood stove

- Keep a glass or metal screen in front of the fireplace to prevent embers or sparks from jumping out and starting a fire.
- Do not burn paper in your fireplace.
- Put ashes in a metal container with a lid. Store the container outside at least 3 feet from your home.
- Have your chimney inspected and cleaned each year by a professional.
- Keep anything that can burn at least 3 feet from the fire place or stove.



For questions on any of these tips or for more information, please contact the Norwich Fire Marshal's Office at 860-887-2780.

HERE TO SERVE YOU

Visit our website for more information: norwichpublicutilities.com
Please call, fax or e-mail us your questions, comments and suggestions.
Norwich Public Utilities, 173 North Main Street, Norwich, CT 06360
TEL: 860.887.2555 Fax: 860.823.4172 E-mail: communitymatters@npumail.com

