



NATURAL GAS

WATER

WASTEWATER

ELECTRIC
STREET LIGHTING



COMING NEXT ISSUE: UTILITY TALK CONTEST FOR DPU CUSTOMERS

Beginning with the winter edition of Utility Talk, the Department of Public Utilities will randomly select and "hide" two customer account numbers within the stories of each quarterly newsletter. Customers who find their numbers in the newsletter must call 646-3937 by the last business day of the following month. They will receive a prize of \$25 credited toward their gas bill if the number is selected in the winter or spring issue and the water/wastewater bill if selected in the summer or fall issue.

So be sure to read each issue of Utility Talk carefully and you might save \$25 on your utility bill.

FREE HOME WEATHERIZATION KITS FOR CITY OF RICHMOND SENIORS

On October 14, 2005 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. the City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities is distributing 1,000 home weatherization kits to senior citizens, 65 years or older, who are residents of the City. The weatherization kit giveaway is being provided through DPU's SeniorCare Program, a new initiative that focuses on addressing the needs of senior citizens. DPU will have a table set up at Pleasants Hardware's 2024 W. Broad Street location and refreshments will be provided to those who stop by.



Each kit comes with its own instructions and includes:

- a door sweep
- draft stoppers
- foam tape
- water-saving shower head
- storm window kit

For more information, please call 646-3937.

HEATING SEASON IS APPROACHING – TUNE UP YOUR FURNACE

Taking a few simple preventive maintenance steps now can ensure you and your family safe and efficient operation of your furnace.

A professional heating contractor should conduct a routine annual check-up of your furnace, water heating equipment and other fuel-burning appliances.

One important area to check is the flue or vent pipe. This is where the exhaust by-products from the gas burned are carried out of the house. If this flue is blocked in any way, it will cause the exhaust to back up into the house which can be dangerous.

The best way to prevent any mishaps is to follow the manufacturer's maintenance schedule.

TUNE-UP CHECKPOINTS

- ✓ Inspect chimney and flue connections and elbows to make sure they are firmly fitted, with no cracks or openings around the flue pipes going into the chimney.
- ✓ Have your burners adjusted annually by an expert.
- ✓ Clean and adjust thermostats.



- ✓ Oil the blower motor and fan and inspect the blower belts for wear. Replace them if they are cracked or frayed.
- ✓ Clean the pilots and burner chamber. Natural gas should burn as a blue flame – a yellow or orange flame could indicate a problem.
- ✓ Remove dust and lint from furnace, vents and registers or baseboard heaters.
- ✓ Check your chimney to make sure there are no interior obstructions like leaves, bird's nests and fallen bricks from structural damage. Any obstructions can be hazardous.
- ✓ Have your heating system checked by a heating contractor annually and follow manufacturer's recommendations.
- ✓ Conduct a visual inspection of the furnace vent system.
- ✓ Clean or replace the air filter, as required.





PURCHASED GAS COST RATE INCREASE

Beginning August 1, 2005, the Department of Public Utilities increased the purchased gas cost (PGC) from \$.825 to \$.980 per Ccf. As a result, the average residential customer who uses 70 Ccf of natural gas per month will pay approximately \$106.71 compared to a current bill of \$95.86.

The PGC reflects the actual cost DPU pays for gas on the market and passes this charge on to our customers without any markup.

DPU forecasts natural gas consumption based on a normal winter heating season. Analysts at DPU review rates periodically and adjust them up or down based on market and weather conditions.



Higher oil prices, a very hot summer and hurricane-related supply disruptions have increased the demand and price for natural gas. "The volatility of the natural gas market makes it necessary for us to routinely make adjustments in the purchased gas cost," said DPU Interim Director Donita M. Harper. "As we analyze rates, we constantly strive to implement the option that has the least impact on our customers."

To help customers prepare for rising natural gas prices, DPU offers information and a variety of programs to help customers proactively take control of their utility bills.

For more information, please call DPU Customer Service at 644-3000 or visit our web site at www.RichmondGov.com/DPU.



Did You KNOW?

With cold weather not very far off, now's the time to take control of your winter heating bills with the Equal Monthly Payment Plan. This plan reduces those higher winter heating bills for residential customers by equally distributing the annual gas bill over a 12-month period. The plan is available to every residential gas customer whose account is current. For more information, call 644-3000.

USING TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE CUSTOMER SERVICE RESPONSIVENESS

As a regional supplier of gas, water, wastewater and electric street lighting utility services to more than 500,000 users in the City of Richmond and the counties of Henrico, Chesterfield, Hanover and Goochland, DPU understands the importance of providing excellent service to our customers. To more effectively and efficiently respond to field service calls, DPU has contracted with a company that provides mobile workforce management software. This very specialized software will improve customer service and relationships and reduce operating costs by allowing DPU to track service orders and manage its field resources more effectively.



Having such a large user and customer base, DPU will use this high-tech software to optimally schedule and wirelessly dispatch work to service crews who, in turn, will also use this software to manage and record their work. This program is expected to provide real-time status updates from the field and helps to ensure that each job is completed by the right person at the right time. Program implementation is scheduled for late spring 2006.

With customer service as a high priority, this technology enables DPU to do more work per field technician, which increases our efficiency as customer growth increases our daily work volume.

NATURAL GAS HAS AN ODOR THAT'S ADDED FOR YOUR SAFETY

Although natural gas is one of the cleanest, safest energy sources available, it may be dangerous if a leak occurs. Since natural gas is invisible and odorless, we add to the gas a strong chemical scent, which smells like rotten eggs, so that you can smell a leak immediately. If you call us at 646-3937, we will send you a natural gas safety handbook.

If you detect a faint scent of gas in your home:

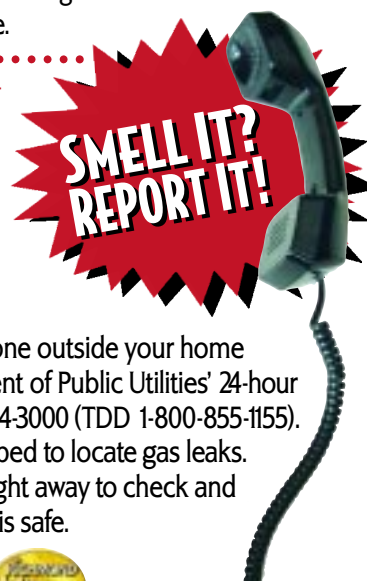
- Try to follow it to the source. It may be a pilot light that is out or a burner valve partially turned on.

If there is a STRONG, PERSISTENT ODOR:

- Leave the building immediately.



- Do not strike a match or touch an electrical outlet, including light switches, or use the phone.
- Go to the nearest telephone outside your home and dial the Department of Public Utilities' 24-hour emergency number, 644-3000 (TDD 1-800-855-1155). DPU is specially equipped to locate gas leaks. We'll send someone right away to check and make sure everything is safe.



Important PHONE NUMBERS:

CUSTOMER SERVICE 644-3000 ■ TDD 1-800-855-1155
STREETLIGHT OUTAGES & GAS, WATER & SEWER EMERGENCIES 644-3000 ■ TDD 1-800-855-1155
"MISS UTILITY" (Before You Dig) 1-800-552-7001



CITY OF RICHMOND
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES

