

Natural Gas Spikes About To Show Up In Massachusetts Winter Electric, Heating Bills

Colin A. Young

State House News Service

It is still technically summer, but Massachusetts energy officials are putting residents on notice now that the cost of heating their homes and keeping the lights on is likely to skyrocket this winter as the price of natural gas soars.

About half of New England's electric generation is powered by natural gas or liquid natural gas, commodities that are sold on the global market and subject to its whims. The region's relative overreliance on natural gas is going to mean budget-busting electric bills for many households this winter and state officials are reportedly working with federal counterparts to prepare for this winter.

"This winter will be, at best, a very high-cost energy winter," Judy Chang, undersecretary of energy and climate solutions in the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs said Tuesday morning. "So everybody should conserve. Everybody who has close friends, please tell them conserve ... I think it's useful for everyone to be aware of that, and spread the word for conservation as much as possible."

On Wednesday, National Grid announced many of its electric customers are going to get eye-popping bills when winter rolls around thanks to the price of natural gas being "significantly higher this winter due to global conflict, inflation and high demand."

Residential National Grid electric customers on basic service who use 600 kilowatt-hours of power will see their monthly electric bills jump from \$179 in the winter 2021-2022 season to approximately \$293 for the winter 2022-2023 season – a 64 percent increase – according to the company and its rate filing with the Department of Public Utilities.

“We know winter isn’t far away, so we’re encouraging and making it easier for our customers to take action now and letting them know that we are here to help,” Helen Burt, National Grid’s chief customer officer said in a press release highlighting its “Winter Customer Savings Initiative” that will seek to help customers reduce energy use to save money and connect with available energy assistance programs.