

O&R: RISING WINTER ENERGY PRICES PUSH UTILITY BILLS HIGHER

Why are the electric and natural gas bills increasing so much this coming winter?

The rising cost of natural gas supplies has increased customers' natural gas and electric winter bills for Orange & Rockland (O&R) and the rest of New York State's electric and gas utility companies.

Can O&R do something about that steep increase rise in bills?

Neither O&R nor the state's other utility companies set supply costs and do not make a profit on the supply.

What does O&R do to try to control these costs?

O&R analyzes supply and demand forecasts and uses a variety of buying methods, including short-term and long-term contracts, to get the best natural gas prices and electricity prices for its customers. O&R provides both natural gas and electricity to its customers at cost.

It's obvious how natural gas prices affect natural gas bills but how does natural gas affect the price of electricity?

Rising natural gas costs increase prices in both the natural gas and electricity markets because natural gas is one of the main fuels that power the production of electricity.

What has caused the increase in natural gas prices?

The cost of natural gas has been driven upward as:

- Demand for the commodity has risen,
- Exports have increased, and
- Supply is limited.

These and other factors have caused a decline in the amount of natural gas in storage in the United States.

How much are the electric and natural gas increases on the energy bills on residential customers this winter as compared to the average of the prior three winters?

An O&R residential customer using on average 600 kWh a month this winter will pay about \$174, a 29% percent increase over last winter's \$135 based on current projections.

An O&R Residential customer using an average of 158 ccf per month will pay \$337 a month from November 2022 to March 2023, 44 percent more than the average bill of \$234 a year earlier.

O&R is urging its 130,000 natural gas and its 245,000 electric customers to use energy efficiently this winter with bills projected to be higher than last winter.

How?

The key to controlling home energy costs is managing usage. That becomes more important with costs rising.

To help O&R's natural gas and electric customers further manage their winter energy costs, O&R offers the following:

- To make natural gas work harder for you, it makes sense to have a qualified heating contractor or plumber clean and inspect your heating system before winter sets in. An efficiently burning heating system not only makes your natural gas dollars go farther, but it's cleaner and safer.
- Taking steps to tighten up insulation by using weather-stripping at all attic stairwells and access points and stopping cold air infiltration from electric switch and plug outlets by using draft blockers can also pay off.
- Double-checking all points where heat enters a room to make sure, draperies, furniture or other obstacles do not interfere with the free flow of heat is a practical, easy way to help.
- And, you can take advantage of your smart meter by viewing your detailed energy usage and customized energy savings tips located in your online account at www.oru.com to more effectively manage your household energy dollars.

Those tips, and other energy conservation and efficiency steps, gain greater importance if extreme cold weather, or other supply factors develop over the winter.

What can residential customers do to further control their energy costs?

- Shop for alternate energy suppliers which may or may not provide you with a cheaper price on energy purchases. For more information about energy shopping, go to www.oru.com and the New York State Public Service Commission (PSC) website at www.newyorkpowertochoose.com.
- To better manage the monthly utility bill to avoid unpredictable bills that result from seasonal usage variations, sign up for O&R's [Budget Billing program](#). Budget Billing does not reduce your overall energy expense. It simply lets you spread out your annual energy expense over a 12-month period (with updates every six months) and lets you know ahead of time what your monthly payment will be. That makes managing the household budget much easier.
- And for convenient shopping for energy-saving household products, it's hard to beat the My ORU Store www.myorustore.com. It's a digital marketplace that offers O&R's residential customers a wide variety of energy-saving household products including LED lights, water/energy saving devices, advanced power strips, smart thermostats and connected home products. The My ORU Store makes saving energy and money, both easy and affordable.
- For additional information about other energy efficiency and free winter energy saving tips, visit O&R's website at www.oru.com/save.

Is there help for customer's experiencing trouble paying their bills?

- Customers can check out our website at www.oru.com/NyBillHelp