

...the first case is a Delta Connection route starting early Sunday between La Guardia and Burlington, Vt. Of the four daily round trips planned, half fall into the agency's targeted times of 8 a.m. to 9:59 a.m. and 5:30 p.m. to 8:29 p.m. The first flight from Vermont arrives in New York at 8 a.m., and the first departure from La Guardia is set for 8:30 a.m. on Sunday. The airline plans to operate the Burlington flight as scheduled, according to Delta Connection spokeswoman Meghan Glynn.

10:00-10:59 p.m. 57.0% 87.5%
Source: Department of Transportation

...capacity to handle as many flights as airlines want to operate. Flight delays at La Guardia caused by congestion rose 60% in August over August 1999, says the Federal Aviation Administration. Delays at La Guardia so far in September account for one-quarter of all delays in the country, Deputy FAA

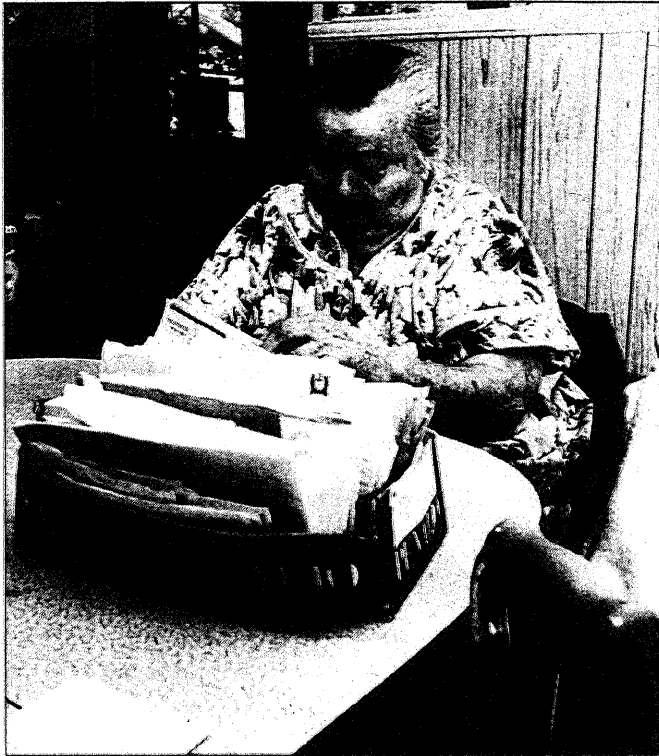
...a group of New York City-area representatives vows to introduce legislation to give airports rights to limit flights, says Rep. Anthony Weiner, D-N.Y. Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater is expected to discuss the situation at a House aviation subcommittee hearing today.

The heat is on consumers this winter

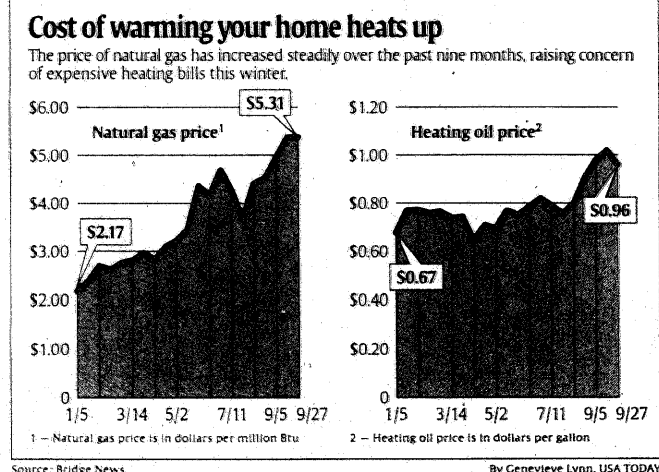
Warned of high prices for gas and oil, they're taking action

By Thomas A. Fogarty
USA TODAY

Natural gas utilities across the USA are sounding the alarm about increased winter heating costs, and their customers are heeding the warning. In cold-weather states, gas customers are winterizing homes, factories and schools to blunt high heating costs to come. Many natural gas users are moving to level payment plans, and heating oil users are locking in prices by buying their winter supply in advance. As early as June, after natural gas prices refused to take their normal seasonal dip, gas utilities began warning customers of an expensive winter. "When it comes time for pointing the fingers, a lot of them will be pointed at the local utility," says Paul Wilkinson of the trade group American Gas Association. "They're trying to minimize that." Gas utilities, which supply the heating fuel for most American homes, are attempting to blunt the inevitable outcry by reminding the public that their profit comes from distribution and delivery, and that the price of the energy itself is passed to consumers at cost. And they're encouraging customers to weather-proof homes and switch to level billing plans. Meanwhile, the only thing rising faster than fuel prices is the anxiety of millions of Americans in cold-weather states who are facing huge price increases in natural gas and heating oil. Jeffrey Jurczyk, a Chicago office worker, will cover the windows of his suburban Park Ridge home with plastic, and he'll hold off as long as possible before starting his gas furnace. He's even investigating buying a wind turbine to generate some of his own power. "I hate to see them go 30% higher on heating prices. That's going to be shocking," Jurczyk says. Jurczyk is not alone in fretting over the need to squeeze a few hundred dollars from the family budget to meet higher heating costs. Spokesmen for energy companies and advocates for the poor report an unusually high volume of calls from worried consumers. Natural gas utilities have been warning customers of increases of 15% to 40%, depending on location. Heating oil, which is commonly used in the Northeast, is already pushing \$1.50 a gallon — a frighteningly high price for the first week in autumn. Increased heating costs may be inevitable, but evidence suggests that many are scrambling to minimize the financial hit. Among the approaches: **Winterizing.** In Waterloo, Iowa, local school officials worked all summer to head off the expected increase in heating costs, says Jack Fitzgerald, oper-

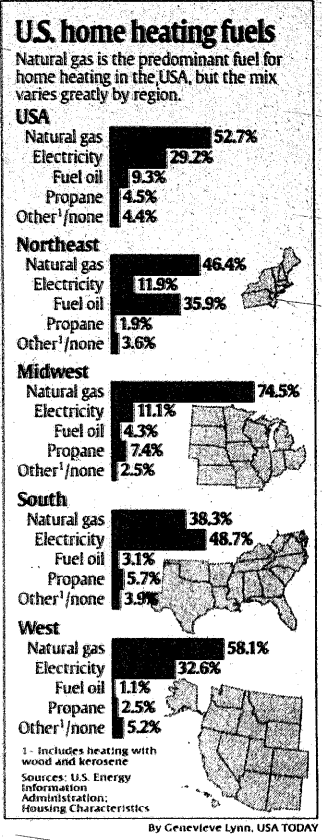


Feeling the heat: Dorothy E. Day looks over gas bills she has paid to warm her home in Columbus, Ind. This winter is expected to be an expensive one.



ations director. Energy improvements included caulking, weather-stripping and door replacements. In many classrooms and offices, thermostats have been altered to limit the temperature to 68 degrees. The district has arranged to use supplemental boilers, which are relatively cheap to run, to heat swimming pools. Despite precautions, the district expects to spend more than \$700,000 this winter to heat its 22 school buildings, up from \$522,000 last winter. **Alternative sources.** Jim Smith, president of Richards Heating and Air

Conditioning, in Falls Church, Va., says he'll be busy this autumn replacing oil furnaces with more efficient gas furnaces. The \$3,000 to \$5,000 replacement cost is attractive to homeowners because it can be recouped through energy savings within a few years, he says. **Managing costs.** Institutional users of natural gas have the option of buying the fuel with the understanding that the utility may temporarily cut them off when supply is tight. Fitzgerald says the Waterloo schools save 28% on the unit cost of gas because



of its interruptible service contract. When the gas is cut, the schools switch to oil. In Gloucester, Mass., David Morey last July shelled out about \$1,700 for oil to heat his home and liquor store this winter. Morey says he is confident the \$1.15 a gallon he paid for the heating oil will look like a bargain when winter hits. Most utilities have been promoting level-billing plans in which the estimated annual cost of the fuel is divided into equal monthly payments. At Des Moines-based MidAmerican Energy, customer inquiries about level-billing plans are running 25% ahead of normal, spokesman Kevin Waetke says. Rochester Gas & Electric in New York isn't waiting for winter. The utility is offering a \$10 rebate for installation of energy-saving thermostats, and it's already bumping up level-payment bills by 20%. "We've mostly got inquiring calls, not angry calls," utility spokesman Doug Mandelaro says of customers' response to the increase in budget bills. Lawrence Kelly, executive director of Tri-County Community Action Program in Berlin, N.H., says his agency, which administers a government heating subsidy program, has been getting 20 calls a day from anxious clients. "I haven't seen anything like this since the Middle East-provoked energy crisis" in 1973, Kelly says. **Oil prices stabilize, 1B**

Automaker may drop Firestone DaimlerChrysler loses design leader

...what he wants. We've said it's the difference. But Taubin said... By Earle Eldridge USA TODAY... on the DaimlerChrysler board of directors Richard Schaub named