

## Gas' Share Up!

According to the American Gas Association, natural gas continues to expand its share of the home-heating market. The proportion of new single-family dwellings that use gas or propane rose in 2003 to 70% as opposed to 68% in 2002.

AGA said new single-family completions heated by gas totaled 967,000 in 2003, up from 907,000 in 2002. Meanwhile, electricity-heating market's share of new single-family home completions was down slightly at 27%. Approximately 2% of such homes were heated by oil while 1% used other sources such as kerosene or wood.

A regional breakdown showed that the Midwest had the highest ratio of new single-family dwellings using gas heat: 92%. The Eastern region was close behind at 91%, 70% in the Northeast and 48% in the South.

The multi-family category showed gas heating at 51% of new construction in 2003. Gas accounted for 98% of new multi-family heating in the Northeast, 73% in the Midwest and 69% in the West. Only in the South did gas come behind electricity with only 14% of new multi-family homes using gas.

Bruce McDowell, AGA's director of policy analysis stated "Gas heat remains the dominant choice for new-home owners because it provides comfortable, efficient heat and is easy to use. In fact, more American homes are heated with gas than all other fuel types combined."

Finally, the 2003 survey results showed that roughly 17% of all new gas customers came from homes converted from another energy source. Of those, half were converted from fuel oil and 25% switched from electricity; the remaining 25% were unable to identify the previous heating fuel for their gas-heated homes.

Overall, more than 63 million American households had gas service in 2003, or 62% of all U.S. households, although not all of those homes are heated. Of those that are, gas was used for heat in 52% of homes, electricity 31%, heating oil 9%, propane 6%, and other fuels 2%. ♦

## "One-Call" System for Julie

Trade associations concerned with the safe distribution of natural gas recently applauded the Federal Communications Commission's decision to designate 811 as the nationwide "one call" number for contractors and others to call before digging a hole in uncertain terrain.

According to Don Mason, chairman of the National Association of Utility Regulatory Commission's Gas Committee, "Third-party cuts in pipelines are the leading cause of damage to the natural gas infrastructure." If there is one telephone number available to contractors and homeowners, we can more readily promote it."

"The next step is to get the number functioning as soon as possible and begin the process of educating the public on this number, which we hope will be as successful and convenient as 911," stated National Association of Pipeline Safety Representatives Chairman Ed Steele.

"It will undoubtedly make calling before excavating much simpler. We want people to call before they dig for their own safety as much as for the safety of the pipelines," said Illinois Municipal Gas Agency General Manager Heather Viele.

In announcing the creation of the 811 system, the FCC said the abbreviated dialing code will provide an effective replacement for an array of numbers used across the country that connect to communication systems operated by underground utility operators, state and local governments.

The commission ordered that 811 be operational two years from publication of its designation in the *Federal Register*. ♦

## Gas Less Than Other Energy in 2005

Natural gas will cost less to use in the United States in 2005 than other major home energy sources, according to the American Gas Association.

Citing a notice posted in the Federal Register by the Department of Energy, the AGA said that 1 MMBtu of gas will cost \$10.92, while using electricity to produce the same amount of energy will cost \$26.55 on average. The cost of an MMBtu produced by heating oil is \$12.68; kerosene, \$16.32, and propane, \$16.94.

The AGA said residential consumers who use gas for water heating will save approximately \$200/year in energy costs compared with consumers who use a similar electric unit. Costs projected by the DOE show that heating a home in 2005 with a high-efficiency gas furnace is \$704, while the cost of using an electric heat pump to heat the same-sized residence is \$784. ♦

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## Smell Gas?

Although natural gas is safe, clean-burning and efficient fuel, accounting for its popularity, gas leaks are dangerous because of the explosive nature of the fuel in given circumstances. Although gas alone is not poisonous to breathe, it contains no oxygen, which is not safe.

Pure natural gas is colorless and odorless, but before the gas is delivered to customers homes, mercaptan is added to give gas its distinctive odor. This allows quick detection of even small leaks. Following are tips for customers to help ensure their safety around natural gas.

- ◆ Never use the kitchen range or oven as a space heater. This can damage the range and produce dangerous carbon monoxide gas.
- ◆ Teach everyone in your home—including children—to recognize the familiar “rotten egg” smell of natural gas.
- ◆ Teach small children to stay away from the gas range and other gas-burning appliances.
- ◆ Don’t allow children to swing from or play with pipes leading to water heaters or other appliances.
- ◆ If you smell a faint odor of gas, look for a pilot light that may have gone out. If you see one, open a window to let gas escape. Wait five minutes before relighting the pilot.
- ◆ If the gas odor is strong and you think there is a leak, leave immediately. Go to a neighbor’s home and call your gas utility office.
- ◆ Never try to locate a gas leak yourself. It could be fatal. Call your gas utility office instead.

If you would like these tips on a ready to copy flyer to be included in your municipality’s next gas bill, please contact Debbie Kibler at 217/438-4642. 📌



**Annual Meeting  
April 19-20  
Springfield, Illinois**

That's right; it's time for the Annual Meeting once again!

The IMGA will host its Annual Membership meeting on April 19 & 20, 2005. It will be held at the Route 66 Hotel and Conference Center, 625 E. St. Joseph Street, Springfield, Illinois.

This year the meeting will begin with a Public Awareness Workshop. This workshop is designed so that participants will walk away at the end of the workshop with a written public awareness plan meeting the requirements of the new federal regulation (RP1162) and a clear understanding of what additional work they must do after the workshop to further customize the model plan for their municipality.

There will be a social hour Tuesday evening at 5:00 p.m. where individuals can catch up with old friends and/or make dinner plans; with the exception of the Executive Board who will have a dinner meeting that evening.

Wednesday morning will begin with a breakfast buffet at 8:30 a.m. followed by the Business Meeting at 9:30 a.m. The agenda for the Business Meeting will include election of officers and the FY 05/06 operating budget, as well as various other business.

Sleeping rooms are available for IMGA attendees at the Route 66 Hotel and Conference Center at a rate of \$49.00 per night. Reservations may be made by phone at 217/529-6626.

There is no registration fee for IMGA members. Non-IMGA members may attend the Public Awareness Workshop on Tuesday for a fee of \$20.00. Everyone planning to attend either day needs to register. This can be done by completing the registration form on the reverse side.



**Public Awareness Workshop**  
**April 19, 2005**  
*Registration Form*

**Location:** Route 66 Hotel and Conference Center  
625 East St. Joseph Street  
Springfield, Illinois

**Time:** Begin at 9:30 a.m. and adjourn at 4:30 p.m.

**Fee:** Workshop is FREE to all IMGA members.  
There is a fee of \$20.00 per individual for non-IMGA members.

**Lunch:** Is included in the Workshop

**Sleeping Rooms:** A block of rooms are available at the Route 66 Hotel for \$49.00/night.  
Phone 217/529-6626 to make reservations.

*It is necessary for every individual planning to attend the workshop to register.*

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Municipality:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Fax:** \_\_\_\_\_

**e-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, my municipality is an IMGA member.

No, my municipality is not an IMGA member. I have enclosed payment of \$20.00 for the registration fee.

Please make all checks payable to the IMGA and mail with registration to 1310 West Jefferson Street, Auburn, IL 62615.

IMGA MEMBERS may fax their registration forms to Debbie at 217/438-6100. For further information please contact Debbie at 217/438-4642.