

***GAS**

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lification of natural gas-fired merchant power plants, Roeder said.

Those plants increased summer demand of natural gas, because they operate at times of peak demand — the hot summer months, when air conditioners are operating at full capacity.

Suppliers weren't prepared for the jump in demand, so supply was low, and prices, consequently, high — not just for merchant power plants, but also for utilities such as Indiana Gas.

The heat wave in the western United States has raised power generation needs, said Phil Ross, general manager of Indiana Natural Gas Corp., which serves 500 residents in Bartholomew and 1,500 in Brown counties.

Indiana Natural Gas Corp. has filed for a GCA increase for August through September that would raise customers' heating bills by about 25 percent compared to the same period last year.

"Companies don't make any money on natural gas," he said. "The (utilities') profit is strictly regulated and monitored."

Ross said the natural gas supply also is lower this year because of hurricane activity in the Gulf of Mexico, where most of the nation's gas is excavated.

Last summer, utilities bought gas for about \$1.90 per 1 million British Thermal Units, Ross said.

Gas bill increase

Average monthly natural gas consumption of Indiana Gas Co. customers with cost in 1999, 2000 and increase in dollars and percent: (Rates for June – August have been approved by the state and are in effect. Rates for September through October are proposed.)

Month	Therms**	Price		Increase (\$)	Increase (%)
		2000	1999		
June					
July	22 (average)	\$25.91	\$22.33	\$3.58	16.04
Aug.					
Sept.	22	\$27.91	\$24.43	\$3.48	14.25
Oct.	42	\$43.06	\$35.84	\$7.22	20.14
Nov.	100	\$84.34	\$69.93	\$14.41	20.61
Dec.					
Jan.	200 (average)	\$147.79*	\$120	\$27.79*	23.16*
Feb.					

** A therm is 100,000 British Thermal Units; a BTU is the energy required to raise the temperature of one pound of water by one degree Fahrenheit
*Estimates which Indiana Gas Co. expects to drop

Source: Indiana Gas Co.

This year the price is more than \$4.

Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission has set a meeting with gas companies and industry insiders for Aug. 30 to determine what caused the spike and how consumers can be assisted, said Michael Leppert, executive director for external affairs.

Roeder said Indiana Gas Co. is also looking for options to decrease bills.

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2000-08-10 Heating bills to increase-Part 2



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