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Washington Gas Expects Winter Heating Bills to Decrease; Encourages Customers to Prepare for Heating Season

WASHINGTON--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- Washington Gas announced today that its customers could expect their upcoming winter heating bills to be 13-20 percent lower than those from last year's winter heating season when temperatures were significantly colder than normal. Prices may vary if colder-than-expected temperatures result in an increased demand for natural gas.

"We have a long-standing commitment to deliver safe, reliable and affordable natural gas service to our customers," said Adrian Chapman, president and chief operating officer of Washington Gas. "By taking steps to effectively manage assets throughout the year, we have an ample natural gas supply on-hand and are well prepared to meet the energy needs of our customers this winter."

Gas supply costs are calculated using the amount of natural gas consumed stated in "therms" on customer bills and the cost of delivering the gas. The cost of gas consumed, which made up approximately 52 percent of the average customer's annual heating bill last year, appears on the customer's bill as the Purchased Gas Charge (PGC). The cost of delivering the gas appears as the distribution charge. As a regulated utility, Washington Gas charges customers the same price that the company pays for the gas supply. The rest of a customer's bill, the system charge, is a fixed monthly amount that covers certain costs of providing natural gas service, such as maintenance and repair of customer lines. Taxes or other fees levied by state and local governments are also included as separate line items on the bill.

As colder weather approaches, Washington Gas continues to encourage customers to prepare their homes for the winter heating season. Take simple steps now to help manage energy costs better and stay safe, warm and energy-smart when temperatures start to drop.

- Change or clean furnace/air filters once a month and schedule an annual furnace or boiler check-up with a licensed professional.
- Caulk and weather strip around doors and windows.
- Install rubber gaskets behind outlet and switch plates.
- Check dampers in unused fireplaces and close them if they are open.
- Turn the water heater down to warm or low settings, never more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Wash full loads of laundry in cold water, using specially formulated cold-water detergents.
- Consider installing new, high-efficiency appliances and look for the *ENERGY STAR* label for efficiency ratings.
- Consider purchasing a programmable thermostat, which automatically lowers the temperature setting at night and increases the setting during the day.

Important winter safety tip: Carbon monoxide (CO) is a colorless, odorless, toxic gas, created when fossil fuels are not burned completely. The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission recommends putting CO detectors outside the bedrooms in each separate sleeping area of your home. It also recommends installing smoke alarms on each level of your house and inside every bedroom. For both types of devices, check batteries monthly and replace them at least twice a year.

Washington Gas offers several payment plans and services to help you manage your time and energy costs. For those customers having difficulty paying their natural gas bills, contact Washington Gas as soon as possible to learn about alternative payment plans that may be available. Plans include:

- **The Washington Gas Budget Plan:** This plan allows eligible customers to spread the cost of winter heating over the entire year. It helps to minimize the impact of typically higher seasonal bills and provides greater flexibility in managing a household budget. The **Budget Plan** is designed as a 12-month program, and we encourage customers to stay on it year-round to realize the potential benefits.
- **Customer Choice:** This is an option for customers to buy their natural gas from a licensed energy supply company

