

Big bills

(continued from page 1)

The crisis program depends on the weather, Brady said. So far this winter, calls to the program have been "way over the norm."

Natural gas customers won't begin to feel the crunch until they receive their January bills in a week or two, according to June-ann Greco of Pennsylvania Gas and Water's public relations department.

"The average monthly gas bill to heat a 2,000 square-foot ranch home is about \$149," Greco said. "Customers can expect to see their monthly bills running around \$179, at least. The more gas they use, the more they'll have to pay."

Natural gas customers may contact PG&W to make special arrangements to pay off their bills, Greco said.

Suppliers of home heating oil and kerosene have also seen an increase in demand.

"We're getting at least triple the normal number of calls," said Michael Drogalis, a bookkeeper at Montour Oil. "There has been lots of panic buying - people wanting to top off their tanks because they think that we'll never get in to them when they run out."

Montour tries to service its customers within 24 hours of their call, or within 48 hours at the most, Drogalis said.

Keeping an eye on the fuel tank gauge and calling for more fuel only when the tank has reached 1/4 can go a long way in helping fuel suppliers service their customers, he added.

Clearing a path to the tank or filler pipe is helpful to fuel suppliers as is keeping the driveway clear and putting ashes or salt out, Drogalis said. He has already had to wade through waist-deep snow to make a delivery.

"Don't cry wolf. Let us take care of customers who are truly low on fuel," Drogalis said. "We have more

What degree day means

A frequently heard term in heating and cooling is "degree days," a sort of arbitrary figure used in weather record-keeping.

According to forecaster Bob Hamilton at the National Weather Service in Avoca, a degree day is simply the number of degrees needed to bring a room to 65° on any given day.

To calculate a degree day, first average the day's temperatures by adding the highest to lowest, then divide the result by two. Then subtract that number from 65.

For example, suppose that today's high was 40° and the low was 20°: 40 + 20 = 60 and 60 ÷ 2 is 30, the average.

To get the degree days, subtract 30 from 65 - you have 35 degree days.

Weather forecasters record these figures every day and add them up for monthly and seasonal totals.

December's 1,077 degree days were below the norm of 1,085, while January's 1,227 degree days as of January 27 ran way above the norm of 1,044, Hamilton said.

by Grace R. Dove

"Most of our callers have run out of fuel and don't have the money to buy more."

Gene Brady
Commission on Economic Opportunity

than 1,400 customers and only a limited number of trucks and drivers. We'll get there as soon as possible."

Prices have also risen with the increased demand.

Bulk kerosene has gone up about 30¢ per gallon in the past month, according to Russ Newell, vice-president of Newell Fuel.

"Our local suppliers are stocking more diesel fuel than kerosene, because that's where the year-round demand and profits are. We now must send trucks out of the area to get kerosene - to Reading, Philadelphia and Carlisle," he said. "We'll take care of all our customers, but it may cost

a little more."

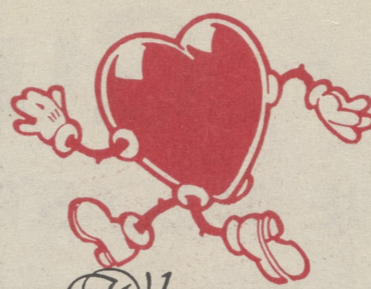
Alternative heating methods have also suddenly become popular.

"If it will burn, people will buy it," said Len DeLeur, a.k.a. Dr. Soot, of Back to Basics in Kunkle. "I've sold 18 tons of wood pellets in the past two weeks. We have had a tough time getting bulk coal because the supplies are frozen solid."

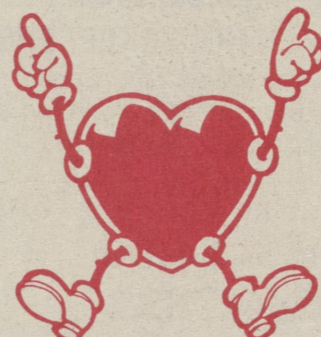
The run on wood pellet, coal, gas and combination stoves began around Christmas and hasn't let up since. When the power shortage hit, people got more excited, he said.

His cheapest stove starts at around \$1,000, with a flue, liner and chimney costing another \$1,000. Only the pellet stoves don't need a chimney because they're vented through a wall.

"After this winter people will probably want stoves as backup heating plants, or to take advantage of the cheapest fuels available," he said.



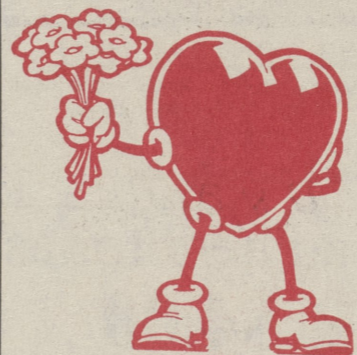
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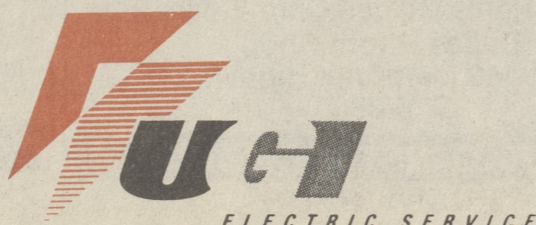
It was the worst weather we've seen, but it brought out the best in you.

All of us at UGI want to thank you for your cooperation and patience during the recent severe weather emergency.

Record-breaking temperatures caused emergency operating conditions. As a conservation measure, we asked our customers to cut back on usage... and your response was nothing short of incredible!

Many of our industrial customers operated only at plant protection levels during the emergency. Residential customers also unselfishly conserved energy. Commercial customers closed down. And those who called us for assistance waited patiently for our service staff to answer the call.

With your help, we were able to avoid taking additional measures. It was a challenging time, but we made it through by pulling together. Thank You again for your cooperation and patience.



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