Company to Start Using Therms on ALL Natural Gas & Propane Bills

Beginning on August 1, the company will report natural gas and propane usage on customer bills in therms rather than dekatherms to accommodate the eCIS+ Upgrade and Consolidation Project.

NorthWestern Energy has been engaged in a project to upgrade and consolidate its two separate customer information systems (CIS) since May 2010. Because the project will merge existing CIS data, it is imperative that the company record customer natural gas and propane usage consistently for all customers. Thus, the company has embarked on a Dekatherm-to-Therm Conversion Project to ensure therm is the single unit of measurement for natural gas and propane usage on customer bills.

This conversion affects only Montana customers because the company currently uses therm billing for South Dakota and Nebraska customers. Both units – dekatherms and therms – measure the amounts of energy customers receive. Although utilities have long used one or the other, therm billing is becoming an industry standard.

The company has scheduled the conversion to take place the weekend of July 29, so therm billing on all customers’ bills begins Aug. 1. The effort also will convert historical natural gas and propane usage information to therms as needed so customers may compare their current usage with that of a year ago easily.

Regardless of the unit of measure, the total amount billed will remain consistent.

To see how the change will appear on your bill, go to northwesternenergy.com and search “how to read my bill”.

What does this mean in terms of measurement?

You can compare a therm of natural gas to the following:

- 1 Therm = 100,000 British thermal units (Btu)
- 1.093 Gallons of propane
- 0.1 Dekatherms
- 29.3 kilowatt hours of electricity
- 0.005 standard cords of wood
- 0.0067 tons of pellets

Keep Your Meter Clear

As you continue grooming your lawn this summer, take a moment to evaluate the area around your natural gas meter. It should be accessible for monthly readings, periodic maintenance and emergencies.

We’d appreciate it if you would:

- Trim shrubs and other plants near your natural gas meter, which should be visible for meter reading.
- Keep dirt and debris away from the meter to prevent corrosion and leaking. And the meter shutoff valve needs to be accessible to NorthWestern Energy personnel and firefighters in the case of an emergency.
- Refrain from putting metallic objects on or against the meter.
- Protect the meter from being hit by vehicles - or anything else, for that matter.
- Avoid standing on the meter or tying animals to it.
**Did You Know?**

Calling to get underground lines located is FREE! Homeowners often make risky assumptions about whether or not they should get their utility lines marked, but every digging job requires a call— even small projects like planting trees and shrubs.

The depth of utility lines varies and there may be multiple utility lines in a common area. Digging without calling can disrupt service to an entire neighborhood, harm you and those around you and potentially result in fines and repair costs. Calling 811 before every digging job gets your underground utility lines marked for free and helps prevent undesired consequences.

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**How Much Energy Are You Using?**

Ever wonder how much energy it takes to blow dry your hair in the morning, or boil a pot of water? Knowing how much energy appliances and devices use, not only makes you a smart energy user—it also makes you a smart consumer.

The next time you are in the market for a new appliance, stop and think about how your purchase might impact your energy bill. Below are some sample calculations from the Appliance calculator on the NorthWestern Energy website. Using the calculator you can find out how different levels of efficiency affect usage and costs.

- **30-39” LED television used 4 hours/day** consumes 168 kWh of electricity annually and costs approximately $20.15/year
- **Range oven used 1 hour/day** consumes 1,129 kWh of electricity annually and costs approximately $135.43/year
- **Hair dryer used 0.25 hour/day** consumes 110 kWh of electricity annually and costs approximately $13.14/year
- **Home office computer used 4 hours/day** consumes 460 kWh of electricity annually and costs approximately $55.19/year
- **The alarm clock in your bedroom that stays on 24 hours/day** consumes 88 kWh of electricity annually and costs approximately $10.51/year

NorthWestern Energy customers in Montana may qualify for rebates for new high efficiency products that use less electricity. Visit [www.northwesternenergy.com/nweplus](http://www.northwesternenergy.com/nweplus) for details.

*Appliances such as microwaves, DVD players and televisions continue to use energy when they are turned off. This is referred to as “phantom” load. NorthWestern Energy recommends using a power strip to ensure your appliances are truly turned off.*

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**NorthWestern Begins Major GIS Expansion Project**

Last spring on the east side of Butte, Montana, NorthWestern Energy initiated a pilot project to inventory, verify, expand and update the vast amount of data the company maintains in its automated G/Technology system about specific equipment that makes up the company’s electric distribution infrastructure. The Geographical Information System (GIS) Expansion Project Field Inventory, which is taking place concurrently with a lighting inventory, is part of a large-scale GIS Expansion Project.

These inventory efforts are essential steps toward the company’s eventual implementation of an automated outage management system. Implementation of these systems will enable NorthWestern to serve its customers better during outages by predicting which customers are affected, pinpointing the source of the outage, providing customers with an estimate of the length of the outage in advance and providing an approximate time the power will be restored.

We have created a new section on our website to warehouse the information regarding this effort. Check out the new “Utility Projects” section to find out more about this project, including when work might be done in an area near you.

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**Contact...**

**MONTANA**

Customer Contact Center  
(888) 467-2669
7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F
Emergency 24/7 Service
Call Before You Dig 811
Energy Efficiency  
(800) 823-5995

**NEBRASKA**

Customer Contact Center  
(800) 245-6977
7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F
Emergency 24/7 Service
Call Before You Dig 811

**SOUTHDAKOTA**

Customer Contact Center  
(800) 245-6977
7 a.m. - 6 p.m. M-F
Emergency 24/7 Service
Call Before You Dig 811

**PAYMENT**

Automated Phone  
Payment Option:  
(800) 218-4959
   (via checking, savings, or money market account)
SpeedPay Automated  
Phone Payment Option:  
(877) 361-4927
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