



Piedmont Natural Gas seeks approval to reduce customer billing rates in the Carolinas

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- **Global surges in the cost of natural gas wane, company seeks to decrease customer bills beginning Jan. 1**

CHARLOTTE, N.C. – Piedmont Natural Gas late last week filed requests with the utilities commissions in North Carolina and South Carolina to reduce customer billing rates due to a decrease in the market cost of natural gas.

If these decreases are approved as requested, bills for the average residential customer in North Carolina and South Carolina will decrease by about \$5 per month, or about \$15 total, for the first quarter of 2022. Pending approval from both commissions, the rate decreases will each take effect on Jan. 1, 2022.

“With so many factors impacting the global market price of natural gas, it’s difficult to predict what rates will be in the coming months,” said Sasha Weintraub, Piedmont Natural Gas senior vice president. “We are glad to see a downward trend in the cost of natural gas to lessen the impact on customers this winter.”

Piedmont requests occasional rate adjustments, called benchmark rate changes, to reflect fluctuations in the market price of the natural gas it purchases for its customers. Earlier this year Piedmont increased rates, citing dramatic surges in the global market cost of natural gas. By law, Piedmont does not mark up the cost of natural gas and must pass through the actual cost on a dollar-for-dollar basis to customers.

“We do all we can to ease price impacts on customers,” added Weintraub. “We are continuing to proactively notify customers about available assistance and sharing ways customers can help manage their bills throughout the winter.”

Equal Payment Program (EPP)

This free service helps customers manage their budgets by eliminating high winter bills. The EPP program levels out a customer’s natural gas bills, allowing them to pay a predictable, equal monthly amount to help avoid billing surprises. Piedmont determines this payment by adding up a customer’s annual natural gas usage and then dividing it into the same payment amount each month. Learn more [here](#).

Assistance for Customers in Need

Piedmont is reaching out to customers whose bills are past due through email and/or text with information about utility assistance administered by agencies in their state and local communities. Customers who may not have qualified for assistance in the past may now qualify due to expanded eligibility criteria during the pandemic. Increased levels of assistance also may be available for those who qualified and have already received assistance.

[Share the Warmth](#) provides funds to local agencies to assist families with their utility bills, no matter the source of energy they use.

The Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) provides winter heating assistance to pay for gas, electric and other methods customers use to heat their homes. There are many customers who are eligible but do not apply for this annual federal benefit that can reduce winter heating costs for low-income families. The links below can provide information on how to apply locally:

- NC: <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/assistance/low-income-services>
- SC: <http://oeo.sc.gov/liheap.html>

Piedmont says anyone in need should apply for this and other newly available programs to see if they qualify. For detailed federal and state-specific information, go to www.piedmontng.com/winterbills and click on your state.

Low- to no-cost energy-saving tips and projects

Natural gas use typically spikes in the winter as customers combat low temperatures to stay warm. Below are tips to help prepare for cold weather and manage your energy use. B-roll of energy-efficiency measures available [here](#).

- Learn how to reduce energy use. The first step to reduce energy use in your home is to identify and prioritize energy-saving improvements. This can be accomplished through a certified auditor or by performing your own energy audit.
- Seal air ducts. Make sure the air ducts from your home's furnace and central air conditioner are properly sealed. Ducts that leak into the attic or crawl space can substantially increase your heating and cooling bills.
- Seal your home. One of the quickest energy-saving tasks you can do is caulk, seal and weatherstrip all seams, cracks and openings to the outside. This can save 10% to 20% on your heating and cooling bills.
- Install smart thermostats. Installing a "smart" or programmable thermostat will reduce your energy use while you are asleep or away.
- Manage water heating. Set your water heater temperature to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or consider installing an on-demand or tankless water heater that only heats water when you need it.
- Consider insulation. Consider whether you need to add insulation to your ceilings, floors and walls. Insulation between the indoors and outdoors reduces energy demand, saving you money while improving the comfort of your home.

Energy-Saving Tools

Piedmont Natural Gas also offers a variety of [energy-saving tools](#) to help customers and our communities identify ways to save money and energy all year long. These programs and tools help customers understand what factors are impacting their natural gas bills and emphasize specific actions they can take to reduce the impacts of high winter usage.

Piedmont Natural Gas

Piedmont Natural Gas, a subsidiary of Duke Energy, is an energy services company whose principal business is the distribution of natural gas to more than 1 million residential, commercial and industrial customers in North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. The company also supplies natural gas to power plants. Piedmont is routinely recognized by J.D. Power for excellent customer satisfaction, and has been named by Cogent Reports as one of the most trusted utility brands in the U.S.

Duke Energy (NYSE: DUK), a Fortune 150 company headquartered in Charlotte, N.C., is one of America's largest energy holding companies. Its electric utilities serve 7.9 million customers in North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky, and collectively own 51,000 megawatts of energy capacity. Its natural gas unit serves 1.6 million customers in North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Ohio and Kentucky. The company employs 27,500 people.

Duke Energy is executing an aggressive clean energy strategy to create a smarter energy future for its customers and communities – with goals of at least a 50% carbon reduction by 2030 and net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. The company is a top U.S. renewable energy provider, on track to own or purchase 16,000 megawatts of renewable energy capacity by 2025. The company also is investing in major electric grid upgrades and expanded battery storage, and exploring zero-emitting power generation technologies such as hydrogen and advanced nuclear.

Duke Energy was named to Fortune's 2021 "World's Most Admired Companies" list and Forbes' "America's Best Employers" list. More information is available at [duke-energy.com](https://www.duke-energy.com). The Duke Energy News Center contains news releases, fact sheets, photos and videos. Duke Energy's illumination features stories about people, innovations, community topics and environmental issues. Follow Duke Energy on Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Facebook.

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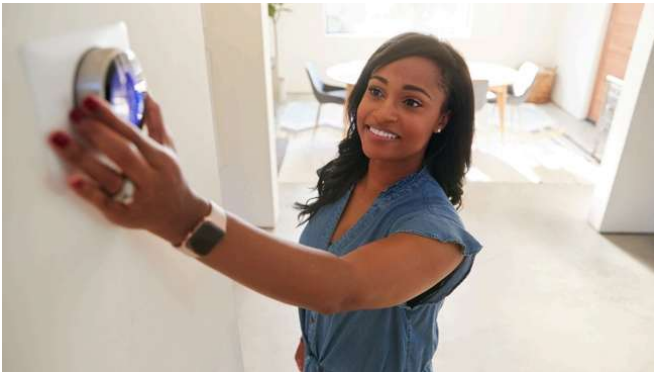
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