



Mount Vernon

An Innovative Community; Authentically Hometown

Columbia Gas Raising Natural Gas Rates by 1.6 Percent

City's aggregation program enables residents to save 10 percent on utility's rates

MOUNT VERNON, Dec. 1, 2021 – While Columbia Gas of Ohio has been actively upgrading its infrastructure within the City of Mount Vernon over the past several years, the utility has noted that those improvements can come at a cost.

Columbia Gas expects that its natural gas bills will rise by about \$1.63 per month for average customers in Mount Vernon by the first half of 2022. That will represent a 1.6 percent annual increase for the typical residential bill.

The Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) allows Columbia Gas to recover the costs of certain infrastructure and energy-efficiency investments made in the previous calendar year by adjusting its rates. Specifically, the utility plans to ask the PUCO for an increase of \$35.6 million to be collected via its Infrastructure Replacement Program (IRM) and Demand Side Management (DSM) riders.

In terms of infrastructure, Columbia Gas has been busy replacing cast iron, wrought iron, unprotected coated steel and bare steel distribution pipelines, as well as other service lines considered hazardous. On the energy-efficiency front, the utility performed 58,200 home energy audits and assessments through September, with 40 percent of its customers choosing to make energy-saving improvements to their homes as a result, according to Columbia Gas of Ohio Vice President Vincent Parisi.

If its revenue increase requests are granted by the PUCO, the utility expects the average small general service rate increase via the IRM rider to be \$1.22 monthly, with the DSM increase coming to \$3.73 for the same level of user, beginning in May 2022. For large general service natural gas customers, the monthly increase will average \$671.58 a month.

The City of Mount Vernon, however, continues to offer its residents an option to lower their utility bills via its natural gas aggregation program. Participants are still charged a variable rate, but it will remain 10 percent lower than the Columbia Gas Standard Choice Offer (SCO) adder rate, adjusted monthly based on natural gas market prices, which were about twice as high this past November than they were in November 2020. The City's current natural gas aggregation plan extends through March 2022.

"Utility rates clearly aren't going down, so we're pleased to be able to offer residents at least some break on their bills through our natural gas and electricity aggregation plans," Mount Vernon Mayor Matt Starr said. "We know that every little bit helps."

Residents who are interested in receiving their natural gas through IGS Energy, the City's aggregation supplier, can call Buckeye Energy Brokers toll-free at 866-302-2237 Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. They may also call this number if they aren't sure whether they've already opted in to the program and wish to check their status.

For aggregation customers, Columbia Gas continues to be responsible for ensuring the distribution of natural gas to residential premises and continues to maintain the meter, monthly reads and pipelines that deliver natural gas to the homes of residents. Their bills also continue to come from Columbia Gas. The only changes residents see are the savings and the name of their new supplier, IGS Energy, on their bills.

Mount Vernon voters approved this governmental program, in which residents gain group-buying power for the purchase of natural gas and electricity from a retail supplier licensed by the PUCO, in November 2008. Periodically, the City collects competitive bids to decide on a supplier for the subsequent cycle.

Meanwhile, the City's aggregation program for electricity is continuing. Last spring, following a competitive bid process administered by the City's consultant, Buckeye Energy Brokers, the City selected Energy Harbor's fixed generation price of 4.69 cents/kWh, which was applied to customers' bills beginning in July 2021. This rate is locked in through December 2025.

Residents who aren't already participating in the City's electric aggregation program may do so by calling Energy Harbor toll-free at 866-636-3749 Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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ABOUT THE CITY OF MOUNT VERNON:

The City of Mount Vernon is an innovative community with an authentic hometown feel. The City is dedicated to providing modern services with an emphasis on continual improvement, customer service and equitable laws that support our citizens and visitors, while retaining and attracting investors in our community. Home to 17,000 people, Mount Vernon is the county seat for Knox County and boasts historic buildings and districts as well as business and professional, educational and recreational opportunities through many adaptive reuses of the community's infrastructure and spaces. The City has strong ties to higher education, with Mount Vernon Nazarene University, Kenyon College and Central Ohio Technical College operating satellite locations in the historic downtown. Located 40 miles northeast of Columbus, Mount Vernon is near the geographic center of Ohio and has connections all over the globe.

CONTACT: Todd Hill
PHONE: (740) 393-9517
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