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Rory M. Christian, Chair

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Utilities Prepared to Meet Consumer Demand for Electricity and Natural Gas During Winter

State Utility Regulator Will Ensure Appropriate Customer Winter Outreach Occurs, Including Information on Available Home Heating Assistance to New Yorkers in Need

PSC Will Closely Monitor Natural Gas Supply Throughout the Winter Heating Season

ALBANY — The New York State Public Service Commission (Commission) today announced that it expects the state’s utilities will have adequate supplies of natural gas and electricity on hand to meet the demands of residential and commercial customers in New York State.

“We will continue to closely monitor the utilities serving New York State to make sure they have adequate sources and supplies of electricity and natural gas to meet expected customer demands this winter,” **said Commission Chair Rory M. Christian.** “The utilities have hedged approximately 70 percent of their estimated statewide full service electric residential energy needs to protect against unexpected electric market price swings that could occur this winter.”

Customer Outreach: The Department of Public Service has a proactive program in place to ensure that customers receive the information and assistance they need. The outreach and education efforts include publications in multiple languages about billing and payment options, financial assistance programs and winter preparedness measures to help with winter bills, and the steps to take if customers are faced with heating-related energy emergencies. Throughout the winter season, staff will monitor issues that could potentially affect the utilities’ operations and their customers, such as weather and heating degree day data; alternate fuel and storage inventory management; and interstate pipeline operational issues.

Electric and Natural Gas Price Forecast: This winter’s electricity prices statewide are projected to be higher than last winter, although commodity prices can vary significantly due to weather and other conditions. While gas bill impacts will vary by utility, natural gas bills in general are also projected to be higher than last year; nationwide, commodity price forecasts are higher this year compared to last winter. On average, a residential customer using 600 kWh per month is expected to pay about \$43 per month for supply, but the actual amount varies by utility. Meanwhile, the average residential customer using 740 therms of natural gas can expect to pay about \$935 from November through March, up from last winter which was milder than normal (this amount will vary by utility and weather). A colder-than-normal winter will cause usage and bills to increase. The State’s investor-owned utilities have continued to reduce the volatility of electric and gas supply prices to their full-service

residential customers. Between financial hedges and gas held in storage, gas utilities have hedged approximately 53 percent of their estimated statewide customer needs.

Winter Heating Preparedness: Staff continues to track weather impacts, pipeline and storage assets, and interruptible customer compliance, and will also work with the local distribution companies (LDCs) and communities to find innovative solutions that increase environmental benefits, while meeting customer expectations for economic solutions. This work includes the aggressive pursuit of efficiency measures, demand response and other solutions to meet growing space and water heating needs. The LDCs serving New York State are finalizing contracting for adequate natural gas supply, delivery capacity and storage inventory to satisfy current firm customer demands under typical winter conditions, including additional new contracts that might be needed. The Department will also continue to closely monitor areas of the State where demand is growing at a faster pace, and where existing distribution systems are becoming constrained. The ongoing gas planning proceeding will include staff recommendations, that have taken into consideration the many public comments received, to modernize the long-term planning process used by the gas utilities. The planning process will include consideration of balancing supply and demand in constrained areas. Department staff continues to coordinate with oil industry representatives and the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority to ensure that customers have access to adequate supplies of winter heating fuels. In keeping with the Commission's reliability requirements, natural gas companies are auditing systems, processes and procedures, as well as scheduling tests to ensure that interruptible customers comply with the Commission's alternate fuel requirements.

Electric System Preparedness: There is sufficient capability to meet electric demand for the winter. As part of the winter assessment, the major electric generating facility owners in Southeast New York who own about 12,000 MW of dual fuel generation capability were contacted. Staff found that these owners are continuing to implement lessons learned from the Polar Vortex winter of 2013-2014, including having increased pre-winter on-site fuel reserves, having firm contracts with fuel oil suppliers, conducting more aggressive replenishment plans, and having more proactive pre-winter maintenance and facilities preparations.

Home Heating Assistance: On September 30, 2021, Governor Kathy Hochul announced that more than \$373 million in home heating aid will be available for low- and middle-income New Yorkers who need assistance keeping their homes warm during the upcoming winter season. Applications opened Friday, October 1, for the Home Energy Assistance Program, also known as HEAP, which is overseen by the state Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and provides federal funding to assist homeowners and renters with their heating costs during the cold weather months. Eligible homeowners and renters may receive up to \$751 in heating assistance, depending on their income, household size and how they heat their home. A family of four may have a maximum gross monthly income of \$5,249 or an annual gross income of \$62,983 and still qualify for benefits - a modest increase from the previous year's threshold.

Applications for assistance are accepted at local departments of social services in person or by telephone, with funding provided on a first-come, first-served basis. A list of local offices by county can be found [here](#). Residents outside of New York City may also [apply online](#) for regular heating assistance benefits. New York City residents may download an application and obtain program information [here](#).

Additionally, Governor Hochul has made \$150 million in federal funding available to help low-income households pay heating utility arrears if they do not qualify for the that assistance under New York's Emergency Rental Assistance Program. The one-time payment will cover all accumulated heating utility arrears up to \$10,000 per household, with applications for assistance accepted at local departments of social services in person or by telephone.

Today's report may be obtained by going to the Commission Documents section of the Commission's Web site at www.dps.ny.gov and entering Case Number 21-M-0243 in the input box labeled "Search for Case/Matter Number". Many libraries offer free Internet access. Commission documents may also be obtained from the Commission's Files Office, 14th floor, Three Empire State Plaza, Albany, NY 12223 (518-474-2500). If you have difficulty understanding English, please call us at 1-800-342-3377 for free language assistance services regarding this press release.