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News Release

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AUB CONDUCTS PRESSURE TESTING ON PORTION OF GAS SYSTEM; CUSTOMERS WILL SEE ACTIVITY AT LOCAL PROPERTIES

ATHENS, Tenn. – Gas crews from Athens Utilities Board (AUB) on October 18 – 20 will perform pressure testing and leak detection on natural gas lines in area neighborhoods and along Highway 307.

The work will involve properties along Eastanallee Ave., Highway 307 running past Mayfield Dairy Farms out to the intersection of 307 and Tellico Ave., and part of County Road 439.

Crews will perform maintenance-based leak testing of the gas system along these routes using automated leak-detection “sniffing” equipment that can detect very small gas leaks, said AUB’s Wayne Scarbrough.

“This work is not in response to any problem. This is to ensure the highest level of safety and service we can provide,” Scarbrough said.

During the work, crews will move from property to property with the sniffing equipment checking main gas lines and service lines in yards all the way to customer meters. In some sections, gas technicians will use golf carts specially fitted with leak-detection equipment, Scarbrough said.

“We are covering a fairly large area in detail in a fairly short period of time, so we want the crews to be able to move about as efficiently as possible. That is where the golf carts really come in handy,” he said.

The protocol for the leak survey requires that AUB crews perform five rounds of tests interchanged with pressure increases on the lines, said Bob Ingram, AUB’s superintendent for natural gas.

“The crews will survey the lines for leaks, make any necessary repairs, then increase the line pressure and repeat the survey. They will do this five times until the pressure on the line is at 150-percent of maximum allowable operating pressure. This ensures a tight, safe system,” Ingram said.

At the conclusion of testing, crews will return line pressures to within normal operating ranges.

Ingram said they fully expect to find small leaks and repair them on the spot. Valve locations on the main lines, interconnections in lines, and fittings at meters sometimes form small leaks over

time. “These type leaks are so small you wouldn’t normally detect them without the equipment we’ll be using,” he said.

The testing is important at this time of year, Scarbrough added, because customers are beginning to put their gas heating systems back on line.

As cold weather approaches and gas usage increases, AUB also offers the following advice for its customers to help control costs.

Cold-weather tips for keeping heating costs in line include:

- Keep the cold out. Reducing air leaks can cut as much as 10 percent from an average household’s monthly energy bill. Seal leaks around doors and windows—and anywhere else pipes or wires enter your home—with caulk or weather-stripping.
- Clean or replace the heating/cooling system filter every month. Use your utility bill as a reminder.
- Keep your furnace tuned and in top condition. Have a certified technician check your furnace and make necessary adjustments.
- Check ductwork and vents. Properly seal and insulate ducts. Keep vents clear of obstructions.
- Control house temperature. Keep the thermostat on the lowest setting at which you are comfortable. Each degree you lower the thermostat can save you 2 to 3 percent of your energy bill.
- Add insulation to your attic -- it can pay big dividends. Most homes in the Southeast should have at least an R-30 insulation level.
- Install storm windows: If this isn't possible, then tape plastic sheeting over each window to reduce heat loss.
- Conserve your hot water. Water heating accounts for 14 percent of your utility bill on average. Repairing leaky faucets, insulating the water heater tank and hot water pipes, and installing low-flow faucets and shower heads can result in significant additional savings.