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## News Release

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### **AUB METERS TELL THE TALE: RECENT COLD WEATHER INFLATES CUSTOMER BILLS**

ATHENS, Tenn. – Recent meter readings by AUB for both electric power and natural gas indicate that the next round of bills could be surprisingly high for many customers.

The reason: more energy was used during the month to maintain a desired indoor temperature.

AUB's Wayne Scarbrough said that the utility's customer service center expects an onslaught of inquiries due to much higher bills than in recent months. "I hope that getting this information out now can avoid some of the confusion," he said.

As AUB processes this period's meter data, customer usage in many areas is twice, even three times the normal level, Scarbrough said.

"We're seeing houses that last period used 2,000 kilowatt hours using 6,000 hours or more this past period because of the much colder sustained outdoor temperatures," he said.

Natural gas usage also is up considerably, according to AUB. This may lead to utility sticker shock for some customers.

"Some may conclude AUB's rates have gone up or that we did not read their meter correctly," Scarbrough said. "But AUB's power rate did not change versus last month, and the gas rate actually went down by about three cents per unit," he said.

With daytime temperatures in the 30s and nights in the teens everyone uses more energy to stay warm whether that energy source is electricity, natural gas, propane, or wood, Scarbrough explained.

"As with any consumable product, whether it is milk, eggs or electricity, the more you use the more you'll spend," he said.

"In the first 22 days of February, 11 nights have been in the teens, seven nights have been in the 20s, and only two have exceed 32 degrees. Daytime temperatures have averaged only 44 degrees and that includes a warmer boost in the last few days," Scarbrough said.

Another perplexing issue for some customers this time of the year, Scarbrough said, is the combination of fluctuating temperatures relative to the timeframe for billing.

“If we read your meter on February 12, for instance, it won’t be billed until around the end of the month because we bill in cycles that include several reading routes. By the time you get that bill the weather may have warmed considerably.

“That’s when callers say ‘my bill has to be wrong because it is warm outside.’ It’s easy to forget that when the meter was read the temperatures were very low,” Scarbrough said.

AUB General Manager Eric Newberry said he understands the sticker shock that wintertime bills can bring.

“I’m an AUB customer, too. I’ve seen the increase in my AUB bill and have felt the same way,” Newberry said. “I’ve opened my bill before and thought, ‘this can’t be right.’ It’s just a wintertime reality, but we understand and work with every customer to explain the situation.”

The top AUB wintertime energy-saving tips include:

- Control household temperature. Keep thermostats on the lowest setting comfortable to you and bundle up if need be. Each degree you lower the thermostat can shave two to three percent off your energy bill.
- Conserve hot water. Water heating can account for 14 percent or more of your utility bill. Repair leaky faucets, insulate the water heater tank and hot water pipes, and install low-flow faucets and shower heads for significant additional savings. Keep water heater thermostats at 120 degrees maximum.
- Add insulation to your attic -- it can pay big dividends. Most homes in the Southeast should have at least an R-30 insulation level.
- Keep the cold out. Seal doors and windows with caulk or weather-stripping. Do the same anywhere else pipes or wires enter your home.