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News Release

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WINTER TEMPERATURES MEAN MORE ENERGY USAGE, HIGHER UTILITY BILLS

ATHENS, Tenn. – At Athens Utilities Board (AUB) the “seesaw syndrome” of falling temperatures and rising bills is under way for the heating season.

AUB’s Wayne Scarbrough reports that customer inquiries for high bills are on the rise as winter takes hold in the region.

Scarbrough said that customers often begin seasonal high bill inquiries certain that AUB has raised it rates or misread a meter. But when temperatures are in the teens, as they have been in recent weeks, even a rate reduction doesn’t outpace the increase in energy usage by each household.

According to Scarbrough, AUB’s rate for natural gas is down by almost 10 percent compared to last year, and the energy rate for electric power actually dropped as of Jan. 1.

“We never mind working with customers on this because, like them, we are utility customers who are just as displeased about how our own household energy bill goes up at this time of year,” Scarbrough said. “But we do want them to know that it’s not AUB, it’s cold weather.”

In October, the average daily temperature in Athens was 64 degrees. That average fell to 48 degrees for November, 45 degrees for December, and it continues downward.

“For January the average low was 26 degrees. Twenty-four of those days recorded lows of 32 or colder, with nine days in the teens,” Scarbrough said.

“In that weather your heating unit has to work harder to maintain a good indoor temperature. By lowering your thermostat, you can reduce your bill to some extent, but when it’s 15 degrees outside—or 45 for that matter—your heat is going to run more and you’re going to use more energy,” he continued.

Already this winter, TVA has noted three record winter highs for customer demand for energy.

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 a bit 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.

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