



ENERGY UPDATE

An update to the state of energy in the State of Oregon
October 2002



General Updates

- Utility Rates – PGE is still committing to a rate decrease in January 2003. According to their website, “business customers can expect a decrease of about seven percent, large businesses from 10 to 13 percent.” State agencies are considered large business customers.

http://www.portlandgeneral.com/business/news_and_events/price_decrease_jan03.asp

“NW Natural has reduced its rates an average 14.2 percent effective Oct. 1, 2002. This rate reduction is in addition to the \$30 million refunded to Oregon customers earlier this year.” Most state agencies saw that refund in June 02.

http://www.nwnatural.com/about/rates/regulatory/or_pga_02.asp

- Weather Update – “the outlook for October-November-December 2002 calls for above normal temperatures over much of the northern U.S. due to El Nino. Precipitation is expected to be below normal in the Pacific Northwest and Montana.”

<http://www.wrh.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/Portland/afd?SLCPMD90D>

TIP OF THE MONTH:

Every door in a building with public access usually has a button for disabled access. It opens the door automatically, helping those in wheelchairs or with physical disabilities enter the building. However, many folks who are not physically disabled push the button and open the door automatically, consuming unnecessary electrical use.

The door opens with the assistance of a small ¼hp motor. Every time the button is pushed, the motor uses electricity. Multiply that by 20+ times an hour, 9 hours a day, by 40 DAS buildings, and we could be spending as much as \$100/day. This is fine if for the use they were intended, but if the buttons are being pushed out of habit and not need, that expense could be reduced.



ELECTRICITY 101

This section of the next several updates will be a brief description of different elements of electricity that impact our buildings and our bills.

#3: Energy Charge

According to PGE, the Energy Charge includes “generated and purchased power supply, as well as the System Usage Charge which covers the franchise fees and other regulatory assets.” This definition would hold true for most electric utility companies. Bottom line, it’s the cost for the actual power that was transmitted to you.

It is generally the most expensive line item on the bill, since it’s the part that an electrical company has to generate themselves and purchase through contracts for what they are short. The cost to transmit the power to you doesn’t change much since that’s just the poles and wires the company already owns, but the cost from other suppliers and generators can vary a lot.

We all remember what happened to energy costs in California two years ago and all the problems they had. That was because the Energy Charge on their bills had gone crazy with the volatile market at the time. The other charges in their bills were unaffected. In essence, the Energy Charge is the part of the bill that most greatly affects the final cost to the customer.



What’s Involved in Running Your Building?

We’ve all seen the DAS Facilities Division, Operations & Maintenance, employees working around our buildings in their blue uniforms. But,

what are they doing day-to-day to keep the DAS buildings operating? Who are these uniformed people?

Operations & Maintenance (O&M) is a section of the Facilities Division with about 130 staff. They are comprised of custodians, electricians, administrative support, plumbers, locksmith, HVAC technicians and refrigeration mechanics, general trades maintenance workers, and managers. Together, they work to operate and maintain about 3 million square feet of DAS-owned building space and another 500,000 square feet of service agreement building space.

Here’s an average process for a customer response (all in about 30 min.):

- A building manager calls or emails in to the O&M office that the temperature in a part of the building is too cold.
- The O&M office dispatches the concern to the HVAC technician.
- If the building is modern enough that it has special computer controls, the HVAC technician checks the Energy Management System (EMS) to compare with actual conditions found in the space. If the building does not have connections to the EMS, the technician goes straight to the building space.
- The appropriate calibration and or repairs are made.
- The HVAC technician finalizes the process by downloading the work order and related information to the computer for proper cost accounting.