



PilotLight

Winter/Spring | 2026

A newsletter for JCE Co-op natural gas members.

Keeping natural gas bills manageable amid cold temperatures

At JCE Co-op, supporting our members and helping keep energy costs as low as possible is always a top priority. We want to take a moment to explain what we've been doing and share ways we can help. As a cooperative, it is important we work together. January's bitter cold, coupled with the effects of Storm Fern, meant higher energy usage as members worked to keep their families warm and safe.

What we're doing to help

During January's extreme weather, we took proactive steps to reduce the impact on our members:

- **Encouraging conservation:** As you requested after Storm Uri, five years ago, we sent out reminders asking members to conserve electric and natural gas usage during critical peak times. Your efforts to reduce consumption made a real difference, not just for yourself, but for all of us. Those collective reductions are helping contain costs for everyone across the cooperative.
- **Purchasing natural gas in advance:** We take a proactive approach to prepare for the winter months, knowing that higher energy usage and market price volatility can create challenges for our members. To help manage these impacts, we plan as much as three years in advance by forward-purchasing natural gas during market dips. Additionally, we maximize the use of available storage by filling it well before demand peaks. These efforts allow us to secure more stable pricing and help shield our members from significant cost fluctuations during the coldest months of the year. It's all part of our commitment to ensuring affordable and reliable energy for our community.

Working together to manage bills

While winter's challenges may affect your bill due to higher usage, please know we are here to support you. If you're struggling to pay your bill, don't hesitate to reach out to us. We have several ways we can help:

- **Payment assistance programs:** You may qualify for financial assistance or programs that ease the burden of high energy bills.
- **Budget billing plans:** We can set you up on a budget billing plan to even out seasonal spikes and make payments more predictable.
- **Energy usage advice:** Our team is always happy to share energy-saving tips that can help manage usage while keeping your home safe and comfortable.

If you have concerns or need assistance, just give us a call. We're here to help you find the best solution for your situation.

Thank you for your partnership

As a cooperative, we know that our strength lies in working together. Whether it's responding to extreme weather, finding ways to cut costs, or planning for the future, your involvement and efforts make a difference.

Thank you for doing your part—whether by conserving energy, staying informed, or simply reaching out when you need help. Together, we'll continue to navigate challenges and build a stronger co-op for everyone.

If you have questions, need assistance, or want to learn more about energy-saving tips, feel free to contact us. We're here to support you.

2026 incentive program launches

Members wanting to save energy and money in the new year should review JCE Co-op's 2026 energy efficiency incentive forms. If it is time to upgrade your old appliances or change out your heating, cooling and/or water heating system, we offer an array of incentives for our natural gas members.

Eligibility criteria for each category is listed on the forms found at jcecoop.com/incentives. To receive an incentive, the member must purchase a qualifying item, fill out the incentive form and return the form with documentation to the cooperative within three months of purchase or installation (instructions on the form). Equipment must be installed within the cooperative's service territory and, in most cases, be ENERGY STAR® rated.



Questions about the program or energy efficiency questions can be directed to our energy advisor John Scott (Inspector Watts) at jscott@jcecoop.com or 815-858-2207, ext. 1339.



Keeping your home safe and reliable this winter.

Gas meter and vent safety

Your outdoor natural gas meter is designed to work in harsh winter weather. However, heavy accumulations of snow and ice can damage your meter and create safety hazards. Here are a few basic tips to help keep you safe this winter:

- Make sure your meter is free of clutter and other obstructions, especially snow and ice.
- When clearing walks or driveways, do not pile snow on or near the meter.
- Keep water from dripping from your roof and freezing on the meter.
- Carefully remove icicles and snow buildup from roof eaves above the meter and on the meter itself.
- Never kick or strike the meter to loosen built-up ice or snow.
- Ensure snow and ice aren't blocking exhaust vents or combustion air ducts. Blockages can expose you to deadly carbon monoxide. Your natural gas appliances, including your furnace, fireplace, water heater, and clothes dryer, require good ventilation to operate properly.



Following these simple steps will reduce the risk of hazards, including natural gas leaks. If you regularly experience snow burying your meter, please contact us at 800-858-5522.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) meeting

As part of our effort to keep energy costs as low as possible, we're also focused on the long-term needs of our cooperative. This year, JCE Co-op CEO and Chair of the American Public Gas Association (APGA), Mike Casper, met with all five FERC commissioners to advocate for key issues that matter to our members. A key part of these discussions was the need to increase natural gas pipeline capacity to meet growing demand and help stabilize price volatility, especially during extreme weather events such as the recent Storm Fern.

We emphasized the importance of expanding natural gas infrastructure, which is critical to improving reliability, stabilizing prices, and ensuring we can meet the growing needs of our members. Natural gas continues to play a vital role in fueling our homes, businesses, and economic growth, while also supporting a stable energy supply for the future.

We also emphasized the importance of proper planning and collaboration. Strategically planned natural gas infrastructure is essential to fueling the economic engines of the communities served by public gas systems. Natural gas will remain essential to America's energy future for decades to come, supporting reliability, affordability, and economic growth.

While development opportunities are emerging rapidly across the U.S., including NW Illinois, meeting the timelines required to provide adequate firm natural gas capacity remains a significant challenge. In many cases, businesses require new or expanded service within two to three years, while the planning, permitting, and development of pipeline infrastructure can take five years or longer. Existing pipelines and storage often lack sufficient firm capacity to meet these growing needs.

After our discussion one FERC commissioner posted, "Adding additional pipeline capacity makes the grid more reliable and energy more affordable. This is beyond debate. Let's put abundant American natural gas to work!"

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