

Natural gas bill increases again

By KATHLEEN MONJE
Of the Emerald

Close to 10,000 Lane County residents will find their monthly gas bills increased by an average \$2.58 on Oct. 1.

Northwest Natural Gas (NNG) has received approval from State Public Utility Commissioner Charles Davis for a 9.7 per cent price increase. The increase per therm, which is about 100 cubic feet of gas, is 3.22 cents.

The typical residential bill of 80 therms will rise from \$26.47 to \$29.05. Commercial rates are also being raised, but the percentage increase is lower because of higher consumption, said Jack Smith, NNG manager of rates and planning.

"This is a tracking increase, which reflects the increase imposed on us by the (Alaskan) pipeline, which in turn reflects a price increase imposed by the Canadians on the pipeline."

"What we're doing is chasing the price of gas," he said.

The last NNG gas price increase was approved in July. Smith said the July price raise was

not a tracking increase, but a general increase which the company needed to cover increased operating costs. "We had to prove to the Public Utility Commissioner that our rate of return was below normal for a company of our size," Smith said.

However, Smith emphasized because of an April 1977 tracking adjustment that lowered prices over 12 per cent, the total net increase to residential consumers for 1977 is a bit less than 7 per cent. "The pipeline lowered its prices to us, so we lowered our price to the consumer."

The average rise in natural gas rates to Oregon customers will be approximately eight per cent. This will mean an increase of more than \$25 million annually in revenues for the state's three natural gas distributors.

Typical residential increases for Northwest Natural, Cascade Natural Gas Company and California-Pacific Utilities company will be 7.3 per cent and 7.2 per cent respectively.

The three distributors' rate increases follow a Northwest Pipeline Corporation increase from \$1.94 to \$2.16 per thousand cubic feet of gas.

Walter who? VP sinks into oblivion

WASHINGTON (AP) - Whatever happened to Walter Mondale? Eight months ago he moved into the vice presidency, established what he called "a perfect relationship" with President Carter, and set off on trips to Europe and Japan as the President's highly visible emissary.

But in recent weeks, the vice president has nearly sunk from public view, so much so that at least one of his staff members worries that "in terms of strategy, it makes sense for Mondale to be a little more visible than he's been."

While Mondale takes pains to defer to the President, his staff members are mindful of his public image and the possibility that someday he may run for the presidency himself.

Close aides to the vice president say he is as busy as he has ever been in the Carter administration, but his activities — advising Carter, attending Carter's meetings with foreign officials, quietly lobbying the Senate, and making out-of-town political speeches — are not likely to attract public attention.

"What's happened to Walter Mondale? I don't know how many people are asking me that" said James Johnson, his executive assistant. "But the weeks since Labor Day have been the busiest three weeks since he came into office."

In the international sphere, Mondale took part last week in meetings Carter held with Egyptian Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan, and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko.

With the President, Mondale has been urging his former colleagues in the Senate to support the Panama Canal treaty.

His much-heralded role in setting U.S. policy toward Africa has lessened to some extent, although he is still "keeping himself up to date on the African developments" Johnson said.

On domestic issues, Mondale announced the administration's proposal last week for expanded home rule for the District of Columbia. He is working with Carter on the administration's major tax revision plan, expected to be announced within two weeks.



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Stamp contest open

Oregon artists have a chance to win the Panama Canal Stamp Contest. The contest is open to artists of all ages and is the first of its kind in the United States. It is headed by Keith Smith, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The contest is open to artists of all ages and is the first of its kind in the United States. It is headed by Keith Smith, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The stamps, which will be used on migratory waterfowl, will be reproduced in color and have a value of \$2.4 million. The contest is sponsored by the Federal Government.

Information can be obtained from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Conservation, 20240. The contest deadline is Oct. 15.

Fifteen U.S. artists will be invited to a national work session on stamp design in Geneva, Switzerland. The session will include the International Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals.



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