



Keeping community leaders informed

Welcome to your inaugural issue of Community Link – created for community leaders like you. At CenterPoint Energy, we pride ourselves on being good corporate citizens and work closely with the communities we serve to enhance the quality of life through community development, health and human services and education. Read on about important natural gas safety information, volunteer events and much more.

News you can use



Natural gas continues to be a tremendous energy value

The price for natural gas in 2011 is expected to be the second lowest price in the past eight years, and natural gas supply is forecast to remain abundant because of increased domestic production from shale plays. Natural gas remains the most affordable, environmentally friendly fuel choice for businesses and individuals. Scott Doyle, division vice president of Regional Operations, at CenterPoint Energy, said natural gas prices are primarily determined by storage and supply levels, and customer demand.

“In the last two years, natural gas prices have substantially declined and are expected to remain relatively stable over the next few years due to dramatic increases in production from domestic shale fields,” said Doyle. With the economy predicted to slowly recover in 2011, natural gas prices are expected to rise slightly in 2011, but will still remain very affordable.”

Continued inside.



Know what's below for safe excavations

While recent headlines have put pipeline safety in the news across the country, CenterPoint Energy's highest priority continues to be the safety of its customers and communities in our delivery of natural gas through America's pipeline system. According to National Transportation Safety Board statistics, pipelines are the safest and most economical method of transporting products.

“We continuously monitor the operations of our pipelines which are designed, installed, tested, operated and maintained in accordance with all applicable Federal and State requirements,” said Jerry Gann, manager of Operations Compliance for CenterPoint Energy. “Routine inspections, corrosion protection, maintenance and testing programs, employee training and public education all help us maintain our strong safety record.”

Educating homeowners as well as professional excavators about how to work safely around meters and underground gas lines is key to damage prevention. CenterPoint Energy's awareness efforts include ads promoting 811, safe digging bill inserts and more.

We also proactively work with our customers to prevent damage by providing line locating services. In 2009 alone, CenterPoint Energy completed more than 1 million tickets requesting underground gas lines be marked for safety before digging.

We use the nationally recognized Common Ground Alliance Best Practices recommendations for underground line marking with yellow paint and flags marking underground gas lines.

Someone you should know



Nelda Juarez
South Texas District Director

Born, raised and schooled in south Texas, Nelda Juarez appreciates the familiarity she has with the area. "I am very much aware of the challenges every community in my district faces today during this economic recession," said Nelda. "Opportunities for growth and development are uppermost in everyone's minds. The South Texas District has been fortunate to sustain some growth during these hard times -- particularly in the IH 35 corridor." She also notes that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), continues to make Laredo the largest inland port and south central Texas is viewed as a great location for companies wanting to start up or relocate businesses to take advantage of the workforce labor and low cost of doing business.

As district director, Nelda oversees operational and budgetary needs for the South Texas district – including day-to-day operations, such as meter reading and construction and service work in the area. In addition, she is responsible for the regulatory compliance of operations and for quality of service regulations as set forth by the Texas Railroad Commission. She works with city officials to keep them apprised of CenterPoint Energy's operations, as well as information affecting rates and negotiations of franchise agreements.

Nelda has been with CenterPoint Energy in a variety of capacities and locales for 33 years, starting just two weeks after college graduation. She began her career in Laredo in Marketing, worked in the New Braunfels office and was promoted to area manager in Universal City. In 1992, she returned to Laredo as district manager and when that office combined with the New Braunfels district, relocated to New Braunfels.

Nelda has been a member of the Laredo Chamber of Commerce, the Laredo Builders' Association, the United Way of Laredo and was appointed to the Laredo Commission for Women representing District 6. She has also served as a Board member for the United Way of Comal County and as a United Way Allocations Committee member for the past three years. In addition, Nelda is a current member of the New Braunfels Chamber of Commerce and serves on the Arrangements Committee for the annual Texas Legislative Conference held in New Braunfels. She enjoys visiting her only daughter, Alexandria, a sophomore in college, reading, working in the yard and bike riding.

SAFETY FIRST!

Stay safe if you suspect a leak

The odor of sulfur or rotten eggs is a sure sign that natural gas is in the area. We add this odorant to natural gas (which has no natural odor) to help warn of a gas leak. If this distinctive smell is detected – indoors or out – follow these safety precautions:

- 1. Leave immediately on foot!**
Don't use electric switches, phones (including cell phones) or anything that could cause a spark – this includes vehicles.
- 2. Go to a safe location.** Find a nearby home or building.
- 3. Call our Emergency Service/Gas Leak Hotline and 911.**
Never assume someone else has taken this step.
- 4. Alert neighbors.**
- 5. Never try to repair a natural gas leak.** Leave these repairs to our trained technicians.



CenterPoint Energy checks suspected natural gas leaks at no cost to customers, so don't hesitate to give us a call.

For meter, carbon monoxide and gas safety information, visit CenterPointEnergy.com/besafe.

EMERGENCY GAS LEAK HOTLINE

Texas..... 888-876-5786

Safety tips at your fingertips

If you have questions or concerns about natural gas safety, answers are available online at CenterPointEnergy.com/safety. Our website provides accurate, timely information about natural gas safety, carbon monoxide (CO poisoning), as well as weather emergencies, safety precautions with natural gas appliances and more.

Safety information in Spanish is at: CenterPointEnergy.com/safetyenespanol



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

Hold that shovel – call before you dig!

To prevent service interruption or a potentially dangerous situation, homeowners and contractors planning to excavate or dig must provide at least 48 hours notice to ensure underground utility lines are properly marked.

Call 811 before you dig and you'll be connected with your state's one-call center which will alert participating utilities, including CenterPoint Energy. Lines will then be marked for safer excavation.

CenterPointEnergy.com/besafe

We're involved in your community

Community involvement has been a priority for CenterPoint Energy for as long as the company and our legacy companies have been around. We are firmly committed to being the best corporate citizen possible through a variety of programs and initiatives in each community we serve. Every day, employees, retirees and their families are hard at work contributing to solutions and activities that make our neighborhoods better places to live. Our programs may vary from location to location, but the types of services we offer are universal – we focus primarily on education, community development and health and human services. Some of our initiatives include:

Education: CenterPoint Energy lends financial support and expertise to energy safety and education programs and encourages employees to contribute their professional knowledge by visiting classrooms to help students understand how business and finance impact their lives. We also teach valuable natural gas safety lessons to children and adults and, our employees participate in community safety fairs and give presentations to civic and community organizations.

Community Development: CenterPoint Energy promotes economic development, revitalization, affordable housing and environmental awareness through our participation in a variety of programs.

Health and Human Services: Partnering with other major organizations allows CenterPoint Energy volunteers to support charities such as the United Way, March of Dimes, regional blood centers, and others that fund research for improved treatments or cures across our service areas. See more at CenterPointEnergy.com/community.



CenterPoint Energy customers help care for neighbors

CenterPoint Energy wants to help ensure all families stay warm during the challenging winter months. Our Customer Care Fund is a community service that provides natural gas payment assistance to families under financial strain, who may find it difficult to pay their heating bills. When customers donate to this fund, they can feel good knowing they are helping their neighbors stay warm. Donations are distributed to area social service agencies that qualify and approve assistance awards.

Tax-deductible gifts can be given any time by visiting CenterPointEnergy.com/carefund.

Energy saving ideas

Reduce energy and lower monthly bills

Customers can follow these tips to reduce energy use and trim monthly natural gas payments:

- During the colder months, customers should set their thermostat to 68 degrees and lower the thermostat to 58 degrees when away or at night. For every one-degree reduction in the thermostat setting, customers can save up to 3 percent on heating bills.
- Furnace filters should be changed according to manufacturer's recommendation. Customers can also clean ducts and vents to improve efficiency.
- Set the home's water heater temperature to 120 degrees to save energy and prevent burns.



For more tips, visit CenterPointEnergy.com/saveenergy.

"Natural gas value" continued

Natural gas storage and supply is strong

Working natural gas in storage is six percent above the five-year average. According to America's Natural Gas Alliance, there is more than a 100-year supply of natural gas. Domestic gas production is forecast to increase 22 percent by 2030 due primarily to large gains in shale formations, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) reports. Shale, a fine-grained rock that contains natural gas, is a growing source of natural gas supply in America and is found in many areas of the country. Its abundance is expected to help grow "unconventional" onshore natural gas production. Shale formations lie deep within the earth and must be drilled first vertically, then horizontally before the natural gas found between the shale layers can be extracted. Shale plays are now being worked in several states including Texas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and many more.

"Natural gas continues to be the right fuel choice for our customers," Doyle concludes. "It is domestic, abundant, and also remains an environmentally friendly energy choice."



Centralized claims information

Despite all proactive precautions, pipeline damage and accidents can and do occur. If you ever need to submit a claim to CenterPoint Energy it will now be taken, processed and investigated by our centralized Corporate Claims department. We make every effort to investigate and respond to claims within seven to 10 business days. For the fastest service, if you need to file a claim:

- Call our Claims Department from 7 a.m. - 5 p.m., Monday - Friday, toll-free at 888-861-0498 or 713-207-7722.
- When filing a claim, please provide as much detail about the incident as possible (who, what, when, where, why, etc.) to better assist in the investigation process.
- After a claim is filed, it is assigned to an adjuster and given a unique claim number.

Online Billing eases holiday rush, helps environment



This holiday season, CenterPoint Energy customers can discover the ease of paperless payment and lessen their impact on the environment. Online Billing is a convenient way to check one more thing off busy holiday to-do lists. It's also a fast, free and secure way to pay monthly natural gas bills. When customers enroll in Online Billing they:

- **Help the environment by going paperless.** Customers receive a paper bill for the first three months and then everything is conveniently online.
- **Reduce clutter.** Online Billing customers receive an e-mail when their bill is ready to view.
- **Enjoy 24-hour account access.** Customers can view and print any bill they've received for up to 13 months.
- **Save money.** When customers enroll in Online Billing, they avoid the hassle and cost of stamps.
- **Experience ultimate convenience.** Customers can pair Online Billing with Automatic Bank Draft and have their monthly bill automatically paid from their bank account.

To enroll in Online Billing, customers will need their bank account information and most recent CenterPoint Energy bill. They can enroll today by logging in to or registering for other online services at [CenterPointEnergy.com/myaccountonline](https://www.CenterPointEnergy.com/myaccountonline).



Always There.®



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Energy saving ideas

Get ready for winter

The colder weather that's just around the corner is also a sign that heating bills may soon be going up. We encourage you to remind your community members to take advantage of the following account services and tips for managing seasonal changes in heating bills:

- **Average Monthly Billing:** Spread out natural gas payments throughout the year and avoid winter's payment peaks. This is a free account service.
- **Payment Assistance:** Customers experiencing financial hardship DO have options. If someone is having difficulty paying their natural gas bill, they are encouraged to contact CenterPoint Energy right away. Qualifying customers may be eligible for payment arrangements, including a credit extension of up to 30 days and/or a Delayed Payment Agreement, which may allow for bill repayment over several months.
- **Energy-saving tips:** Visit CenterPoint Energy's website (*Save Energy and Money* section) for easy-to-incorporate tips and how-to videos on weatherizing, insulating and other ways homeowners can save energy during colder winter months.



Important phone numbers

Gas Leak Emergency 911 and
 888-876-5786

Call Before You Dig 811

CUSTOMER SERVICE

Texas (Beaumont) 800-376-9663
Texas (East) 800-259-5544
Texas (South) 800-427-7142

ACCOUNT AND OTHER ONLINE SERVICES

CenterPointEnergy.com/selfservice

PAYMENT ADDRESS

CenterPoint Energy, Inc.
PO Box 4583
Houston, TX 77210-4583

WEBSITE

CenterPointEnergy.com

