



Ameren wants to offer incentives to use less gas

By Mike Riopell | Wednesday, February 13, 2008



SPRINGFIELD — Ameren has turned in a proposal intended to reward customers who use less natural gas only weeks after getting approval for a similar plan involving electricity.

The incentive-based plan is meant to use various means to convince customers to use less natural gas. That could mean incentives to buy a more efficient furnace or installing new windows, for example.

The Illinois Commerce Commission must sign off on Ameren's proposal before it can take effect, and details aren't yet available.

Just this month, the commission approved a similar program for both Ameren and ComEd to urge customers to save electricity by buying energy efficient light bulbs.

"Working in tandem, these two programs can provide customers with the tools they need to better control their energy usage and realize significant dollar savings through lower monthly natural gas and electric bills," Stan Ogden, an Ameren vice president, said in a statement.

ComEd and Ameren both had to develop their electricity plans because of a settlement the utilities reached with lawmakers over high power bills last year.

For natural gas, Ameren customers would pay an average of 36 cents a month for the efficiency program. The company said customers should be able to more than make that up in incentives.

In the meantime, Ameren has a case pending asking for increase in what they charge for the delivery of natural gas.

ComEd and Ameren both also are asking for a delivery charge increase for electricity.

Tuesday, officials with the Citizens Utility Board and others argued to the Commerce Commission that ComEd shouldn't get most of what it's asking for. Spokesman David Kolata said they could make similar arguments on

Ameren's case next month.

"We hope if any kind of rate increase comes from this, it will be very small," Kolata said.

Final decisions aren't expected until later this year.

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