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A terrible time for higher rates

Brace yourselves, AmerenIP customers, for sharply rising bills.

Last week, Ameren announced natural gas price increases of 20 percent to 30 percent this winter, just days after an administrative law judge panel recommended Ameren's Illinois operations get a \$163.5 million increase in electric delivery charges. The electric increases could go into effect as early as October.

The Illinois Commerce Commission should grant only part of that electric request. The attorney general says the amount is excessive; the Citizens Utility Board thinks \$58 million would be fair. Maybe the ICC can split the difference.

The utility has a talent for making its rate increases sound reasonable. Basically, they say their costs have increased just like everyone else's.

The difference is, everyone else has to absorb those extra costs, not pass them along to someone else. Higher bills for these essential services make tough times too challenging for many ratepayers.

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