



Amere Rate Hikes

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(Springfield) -- Top officials at Ameren say the high cost of storm damage repairs is driving their request for a utility rate hike. Ameren spokesman Leigh Morris says the price tag for the recent inland hurricane and other storms is 35-million dollars so far this year. Morris says that damage eclipses Ameren's nine-million dollar disaster clean-up budget, and that a rate hike for electricity and natural gas will help cover that cost. Ameren officials say another reason they're running short on cash is that more customers aren't paying their bills. But David Kolata with the Citizens Utility Board says the rise in people unable to pay their bills means utility prices shouldn't go up further. Ameren requested the 226-million dollar increase to the delivery rate for electricity and natural gas last week. That rate increase couldn't show up on bills until next May.
