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**NATIONAL FUEL'S 2019-20 WINTER HEATING SEASON FORECAST:
LOWER WINTER BILLS COMPARED TO LAST YEAR**

The average customer bill for the winter heating season could drop by 14.7%

(October 10, 2019) WILLIAMSVILLE, N.Y. – It's **THAT** time of year in Western New York: the chill in the air and shorter daylight signals the seasonal shift to the looming winter ahead. And this winter could be a wild ride, according to experts at the Farmer's Almanac, with so many ups and downs on the thermometer that it could be called a "polar coaster."

As most area residents know, long-range weather forecasting in this region is tricky so the predicted fluctuating winter weather is a challenge for National Fuel Gas Distribution Company (referred to as "National Fuel" or the "Utility") to determine the average customer cost of keeping warm this winter heating season from November through March. With that in mind, National Fuel estimates that its customers will experience a decrease in their natural gas bills from last winter by approximately \$17.66 a month or 14.7%. Nearly 94% of all homes in Western New York utilize natural gas as their principal energy source for heating, cooking, and other lifestyle conveniences, including fireplaces, water heaters, pool heaters, and fireplaces.

On average, residential heating customers should expect their five-month winter heating season bill from November through March to total \$511.25 provided the weather is a more typical Western New York winter. In comparison, last winter's five-month tally was \$599.57 with weather that ran 2.5% colder-than-normal overall. The previous winter season had daily temperatures of 30 degrees or colder more than 72% of the time.

"Several factors come into play for the lower-cost winter heating season forecast, including a decrease in the actual cost of the natural gas or the commodity price," said Karen L. Merkel, spokesperson for National Fuel. "Our location to domestically-produced shale gas along with proximity to pipeline capacity to transport the gas provides an unprecedented economic advantage over other utilities across New York state and the U.S."

Nearly half of the natural gas that customers will use this winter was purchased during the summer months when prices on the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX) were between \$2.14 and \$2.71 per dekatherm (Dth). All of National Fuel's summer natural gas purchases were sourced from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and West Virginia shale-producing regions at a discount to NYMEX summer prices. The Company's average summer purchase price was approximately \$2.10/Dth. The current winter NYMEX strip is trading at \$2.55/Dth and the shale-producing region winter discount is expected to lower the price by approximately \$.30.

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Natural gas commodity prices have been steadily declining due to production growth and moderate summer temperatures in the Northeast. Winter prices are always subject to weather volatility but given National Fuel's location relative to the shale producing regions, prices are expected to remain stable through the winter and following summer.

According to average customer billing information provided by the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA), National Fuel is ranked number one in the state for affordability and fourth in the nation when compared against its peers.

“National Fuel's utility customers have enjoyed significant savings from natural gas – the average annual bill for residential customers has decreased 43%, or \$720, since the winter of 2008-09. For our commercial and industrial customers, the wholesale cost of natural gas has been reduced by more than 60% since 2008. Nearly 100% of the natural gas used in homes and businesses across Western New York was developed and produced in nearby states and transported here at a substantial cost savings,” Merkel explained.

Throughout the winter season, it is important for natural gas customers to pay attention to outdoor gas meters as well as furnaces and associated vents. Snow, ice, and extremely cold temperatures can pose a variety of safety and performance issues for heating systems. Natural gas furnaces and fireplaces each have a vent pipe or flue that sends exhaust and gaseous byproducts outdoors through a chimney or pipe. Furnace exhaust vents can become clogged by debris, ice, or snow, causing the furnace to shut off or operate inefficiently. Blocked vents also can lead to a buildup of carbon monoxide gas inside a residence.

National Fuel does realize that energy costs can present a challenge for American families, particularly those facing economic hardship or living paycheck to paycheck. Numerous programs are available to help individuals who struggle to make their payments, and the Utility encourages customers to contact a customer assistance representative to discuss their personal situation. For customers who want to have level, predictable monthly gas payments this winter, National Fuel suggests budget plan billing as a way to stabilize monthly heating bills. Information is available on the Utility's website at www.nationalfuel.com.

The federally-funded **Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP)** provides payment-challenged families and individuals with financial assistance on a first-come, first-served basis, based on income guidelines. HEAP will open across New York state in mid-November. Visit www.HEAPhelps.com or contact 1-877-443-2743 to check eligibility.

A quick call to customer service can provide information on the following programs: **Neighbor For Neighbor Heat Fund** is open year-round and helps qualified customers who are aged 55 years or older, disabled, currently receiving unemployment benefits, military veterans, or have certified medical conditions to prevent energy emergencies; a **Deferred Payment Agreement** allows the potential to negotiate a repayment plan in the event of a problem or special circumstance; **Special Protections** is applicable for households where all residents are aged 62 years or older, 18 years or younger, blind or disabled. Customer assistance is available each weekday from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. by contacting 1-800-365-3234.

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"You can easily save energy in the winter by setting the thermostat between 65 degrees and 70 degrees during the winter, and at 58 degrees when away from the house for eight straight hours – a savings of as much as 1% for each degree," said Merkel.

Additional energy efficiency tips are available at National Fuel's conversation program website at www.nationalfuelforthought.com.

National Fuel Gas Distribution Corporation is the Utility segment of National Fuel Gas Company, a diversified energy company that is engaged in a number of natural gas-related activities. The Utility provides natural gas service to approximately 740,000 customers in Western New York and northwestern Pennsylvania.