



## THE COST OF GAS

### Dear Customer

We feel your pain. The monthly gas bill has been higher this year than it has in the past fifteen years. (Surprisingly, we experienced the similar rates between Dec. 1, 2005 and Sept. 30, 2006.) What is going on? Can the gas company raise their rates without permission from the Public Regulation Commission?

Zia Natural Gas Company can't raise its approved tariff rates without a hearing and approval from the New Mexico Public Regulation Commission (NMPRC). We have not changed our tariff rates since 2019. The piece that has changed dramatically is the Cost of Gas. The Cost of Gas is the price we pay to purchase and transport the natural gas to our system. The Cost of Gas is directly passed through to the

customer; gas utilities are not allowed to make or lose money on the cost to purchase and transport natural gas. The process in which we calculate the Cost of Gas was approved in Case No. 20-00201-UT. The latest update to the Cost of Gas and the results of the audit on our gas purchases were filed with the NMPRC on September 23, 2022. The new Cost of Gas went into effect for gas sold after October 1, 2022 which would have been seen on the bill received at the beginning of November.

Natural gas markets have fluctuated in the past 2 years due in part to tensions in Europe, tighter natural gas supplies, political uncertainty, and concern over another major price spike. To ensure reliability and to protect against major price spikes, we contract for a



portion of our customer's volumes at a set price each year. At times the contract price may be higher or lower than spot market prices, but it does shield the customers from major price fluctuations and provides reliability of the gas supply.

In addition to higher market prices, a portion of the current Cost of Gas on your bill is related to the major natural gas price impact from Winter Storm Uri which hit Texas in February of 2021 but affected natural gas spot market prices in a large portion of the US. In Case No 21-00096-UT, the NMPRC approved collection of the purchase gas cost from this 7-day event to be spread over a 3-year period.

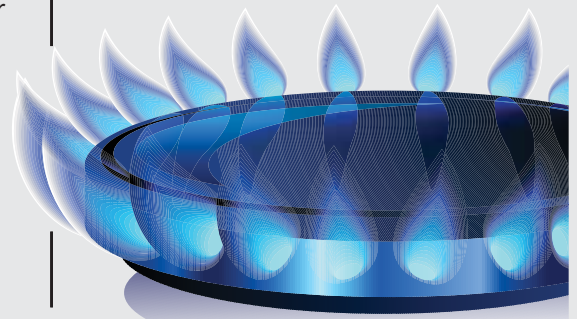
### Double Whammy

On top of a higher Cost of Gas, both November and December were exceptionally cold. In the gas industry, we measure heating degree days to better understand our customer's natural gas needs. In all our service areas, we were much colder than the 10-year average. That means our customers used more natural gas. So not only are prices higher but usage is also higher. In Lea County, the last time it was that cold in November was in

2000; in Lincoln County it was 2004; in Dona Ana County, it was also 2000; in Colfax County, it was only since 2019, but it was still colder than the 10-year average.

By rule, Zia Natural Gas Company passes the Cost of Gas to its customers without markup; We don't make profit on the gas we purchase for our customers.

Zia Natural Gas Company is committed to providing reliable and economical natural gas service to all its customers.



february  
14<sup>th</sup>



Happy  
Valentine's  
Day

**Recipe**  
DIRECTIONS

**Chicken  
Parmesan  
Stuffed Shells**

**Ingredients:**

1 package (12 ounces) uncooked jumbo pasta shells	2 tablespoons olive oil
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**Filling Ingredients:**

1-pound boneless skinless chicken breast, cut into ½ inch cubes	1 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese
1 ½ teaspoons Italian seasoning	½ cup grated Parmesan cheese
1 teaspoon salt, divided	½ cup 2% milk
½ teaspoon pepper, divided	¼ cup chopped fresh Italian parsley
1 tablespoon olive oil	4 cups meatless pasta sauce
2 tablespoons butter	¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese
½ cup seasoned bread crumbs	8 ounces fresh mozzarella cheese, thinly sliced and halved
3 cups part-skim ricotta cheese	

**Directions**

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Cook shells according to package directions for al dente; drain. Toss with oil; spread in an even layer on a baking sheet.
2. For filling, toss chicken with Italian seasoning, ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper. In a large skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat; saute chicken just until lightly browned, about 2 minutes. Reduce heat to medium; stir in butter until melted. Stir in bread crumbs; cook until crumbs are slightly toasted, 2-3 minutes, stirring occasionally. Cool slightly.
3. In a large bowl, mix cheese, milk, parsley, and the remaining salt and pepper. Fold in chicken.
4. Spread 2 cups pasta sauce into 13x9 inch baking dish. Fill each shell with 2 ½ tablespoons cheese mixture, place over sauce. Top with remaining sauce and cheeses (dish will be full).
5. Cover with greased foil; bake until heated through, 10-15 minutes.

**COMMUNITY CALENDAR**

**Every Wednesday and Saturday** – Las Cruces - Farmers & Crafts Market 8:30 am to 1 pm  
**February 18-19** – Ruidoso – Annual Vines in The Pines Art and Wine Festival at the Ruidoso Convention Center 12-6 pm. <https://www.ruidosonow.com>  
**February 19** – Las Cruces – Ordinary Elephant Cruces Creatives 205 Lohman 3:30 5:30 pm, contact (575) 448-1072 or go to the ordinaryelephant.net website.  
**February 24** – Ruidoso – Keith Sweat Live 6-11:30 PM Inn of the Mountain Gods.  
**February 24 & 25 March 3, 4 & 5** – Hobbs – Hookman All evening performances begin at 7:30 with the matinees at 2 pm. ASNMSU Center for the Arts! 575-646-4515 for more information.  
**February 25** – Ruidoso – SPIVEY Lost Hiker Brewing Company 26394 HWY 70. 5 - 8 pm.  
**Reminder:** We use this section for our local communities. The messages must be non-partisan and non-religious. Non-Profit organization messages will be given preference. Please send the information to [osaucedo@zngc.com](mailto:osaucedo@zngc.com) before the 10th of the month to make the following month edition. Thank you.

**Behind on your gas bill?**



**If you are behind on your gas bill, we can help!**  
**We offer payment arrangements to get you back on track!**  
**Call your local office to find out more!**

“Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.” – Corrie Ten Boom

**How can residential natural gas consumers reduce their natural gas bills?**

**Consumers can reduce their natural gas bills in several ways:**

- Participate in Zia’s yearly budget plan to spread natural gas bills evenly throughout the year.
- Check natural gas space-heating equipment for efficient operation. Change the air filter regularly.
- Lower building thermostat settings, especially when buildings are unoccupied.
- Obtain an energy audit to identify other ways to reduce energy consumption.

**Federal government programs provide grants to state government agencies for energy assistance to households that have limited budgets:**

- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) (LIEAP) distributes funds to states to help low-income households pay heating bills.
- Weatherization Assistance Program provides grants to states, territories, and some Indian tribes to improve the energy efficiency of the homes of low-income families.

Additional state energy assistance and fuel fund programs may be available to help households pay energy bills during winter emergencies. Consumers can find out if they qualify for assistance in their states by contacting the state public utility or service commission or by contacting the local natural gas utility.



**New Mexico’s Natural Choice...Zia Natural Gas Company**  
**Proudly celebrating over 30 years of service and looking forward to many more!**

**Zia Natural Gas Company area offices:**

<b>Lincoln County</b> 100 Short Drive Ruidoso Downs, NM 88346 575-378-4277 1-800-520-4277 (575) 378-4138 Fax <b>Mailing Address</b> PO Box 888 Ruidoso Downs, NM 88346	<b>Hobbs/Jal</b> 510 E. Bender Hobbs, NM 88240 575-392-4277 1-800-470-9900 (575) 392-8504 Fax <b>Mailing Address</b> PO Box 2220 Hobbs, NM 88241	<b>Dona Ana County</b> 3700 W. Picacho Ave. Las Cruces, NM 88007 575-526-4427 1-800-453-5546 (575) 523-4945 Fax <b>Mailing Address</b> 3700 W. Picacho Ave. Las Cruces, NM 88007	<b>Maxwell-Cimarron-Springer</b> 316 Maxwell Ave. Maxwell, NM 87728 575-375-2277 1-800-520-4277 (575) 375-2753 Fax <b>Mailing Address</b> PO Box 357 Maxwell, NM 87728
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