

the Messenger

A newsletter from Middleborough Gas & Electric Department February 2004

Winter is never easy in New England. This winter has been especially tough for our customers and our crews. But, with every winter event, we're learning new ways to make storms, snow and icy blasts easier to bear.

A story of wild winter weather

First came the storm . . .

On the weekend of December 6 and 7, our region was hit with a major winter blizzard, dumping more than two feet of heavy wet snow in our towns and causing power outages that lasted, in some areas, more than 48 hours.

Our crews continued to work throughout the storm and weekend recovery, taking time to sleep only during the late night hours. Customers and crewmen alike were frustrated by the slow progress as trees and branches continually filled with snow, and bent and breaking branches contacted power lines, wiping out what had just been cleared and turned back on.

After the damage was repaired, MG&E managers worked with the Board of Commissioners and a utility operations consulting firm to assess the recovery process and learn from this experience.

They determined a number of steps to take in the near future to work with customers and help speed up the recovery from storm damage, including:

- More aggressive tree trimming on rights-of-way and heavily treed roadways,
- Installation of heavy duty lines in areas of limited access that are resistant to "contact outages" but not completely safe from heavy falling limbs and trees,
- Reviewing phone answering system options for better customer access to current information about our recovery progress.

(Continued on the back)

More fuel assistance funds available

More heating cost assistance may be available to you because FEMA funds are now supplementing normal fuel assistance funds due to the extreme cold. For more information call Citizens for Citizens at 508-823-6346 if you live in Lakeville, or South Shore Community Action Council at 508-746-6707 if you live in Middleborough.



Statistics on our coldest day



Peak day gas use in 2003:
5,000 mcf (thousands of cubic feet)

Peak day use on 1/16/04:
5,911 mcf

Peak use predicted by MG&E
planning models: *5,900 mcf*

Peak hourly flow reached in 2003:
260 mcf

Peak hourly flow on 1/16/04:
282 mcf

Maximum capacity flow rate:
330 mcf

Coldest recorded temperature on
1/16: *8 degrees below zero*

Last time that low was reached:
30 years ago



Wild winter weather (continued from front)

These steps could require a significant investment in time and budget and MG&E management will be working with the Commission to bring about these measures over the coming months.

Then came the cold . . .

On Monday, January 5, we received a weather advisory that by Friday, temperatures would plummet to 10 below zero. While the supply of natural gas was never in question, our ability to deliver it to homes and businesses in Middleborough would be a balancing act.

We receive natural gas from the Algonquin Pipeline station to our south and three Bay State Gas interconnects to our north. We supplement this supply with Liquefied Natural Gas from our own tank at peak hours. This is an intricate system kept at a consistent pressure necessary to supply our customers and it requires constant monitoring to keep stable, especially at extreme levels of use. Operating any system at maximum capacity can be a cause for concern. And so, we asked for help.

All Middleborough town offices kept thermostats down to 65 degrees at the request of Town Manager Jack Healey. Some of our largest industrial customers did the same and pledged to avoid any extra use of natural gas. And on the coldest day, we opened our administrative offices late to avoid peak use and Middleborough public schools closed as did more than 350 school systems throughout the state. In the end, we received a lot of attention in the media as a result of our early warning.

All of these efforts were successful. Even though we broke records for natural gas use on Thursday and matched them again on Friday, we still remained below the maximum capacity of our system. And we avoided any kind of inadvertent strain that could have caused problems during this period of critical cold.

MG&E will be adding significantly to our gas delivery capacity and that project should be complete before next winter's weather. However, for one week in a frosty January, we learned just how well-connected we all are and how well we can work together for the good of all.



TOWN LINES

Council plans Veterans' Memorial Park

In 2003, the Middleborough Veterans' Council voted to form the Middleborough Veterans' Memorial Park, to be constructed on the lawn of the Town Hall. The members of the MVMPC are all local veterans, many having served in World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom. The purpose of the Council is to establish the park to honor all veterans of Middleborough. The park will include monuments and plantings as well as walkways and a central courtyard lined with engraved bricks sponsored by local residents.

If you would like to help the Council in their efforts to make this important memorial a reality, please call Paul Provencher, Veterans' Services Officer for the Town of Middleborough at 508-946-2407.

DIRECTORY

Customer Service & Billing
508-947-1371

Gas Service Questions
508-947-1535

Electric Service Questions
508-947-3023

Emergency:

Gas 508-947-1535

Electric 508-947-3023

Payment locations:

Main office:

32 S. Main St.,
Middleborough
8:45 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Pay Boxes:

Savas Plaza
Route 18, Lakeville

Stop 'N Shop Plaza
Route 28,
Middleborough

Main office parking lot
32 S. Main St.,
Middleborough

Holiday Closings:

Monday, February 16
Presidents' Day

Monday, April 19
Patriots' Day

Commission Meetings:

Meetings are typically held the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. in the Administrative Offices at 32 S. Main St., Middleborough. Please call 508-947-1371 to confirm dates and times.

