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MedCentral Neighborhood Watch



SPECIAL

POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Fire Safety for the Holidays
- Winter & Disaster Preparedness
- Columbia Gas Rate Increase
- Important Phone Numbers
- Curfew Information

Happy Holidays
From all your neighbors
involved in Neighborhood Watch.



October 15th
November 19th
February 18th
at 7PM

Located in the
Robert Jones Conference Room
MedCentral

MedCentral Neighborhood Watch Newsletter PREPARING FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Oct 15 th @ 7pm

Each year fires occurring during the holiday season claim the lives of over 400 people, injure 1,650 more, and cause over \$990 million in damage.

According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA), there are simple life-saving steps you can take to ensure a safe and happy holiday.

By following some of the outlined precautionary tips, individuals can greatly reduce their chances of becoming a holiday fire casualty. Join us at this month's Neighborhood Watch Meeting as we look at how to keep you safe for the holidays. Bring your family !! This could save your life someday!

November 19th

Winter weather is something we have learned to deal with. Each year we still have many people that are unaware of the resources available to them in these hard times or they are simply not prepared.

Join us as we talk about building a disaster kit for your home, car, and travel so that you won't become a victim this winter.

Kathi Cutlip

will be joining us for a session of winter & disaster preparedness.

Do you know what things you should have in your car in the event you would get stranded?

Do you have a copy of your prescriptions and other documents available in the event you would need to seek shelter? These and many other questions can help you be prepared this winter in preparation for storms.

Attention Friends & Neighbors

Please take an hour out of your day to learn about the programs available for you & your family.

Neighborhoods working Together

We will be exploring alternate ways to announce the meetings.

**Bring your suggestions to
Octobers Meeting**

**Updated Announcements'
will be on the website listed at
the top of this page**

Meetings will be **every 3rd Wed.** of each month at **7pm.** We plan to have speakers related to the topic brought up in the meetings. If you would like a speaker on a certain topic please notify us to get the speaker scheduled.

PROTECT YOURSELF & STAY SAFE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Identity Theft is a crime in which an impostor obtains key pieces of personal identifying information (PII) such as Social Security numbers and driver's license numbers and uses them for their own personal gain. This is called ID Theft.

It can start with lost or stolen wallets, pilfered mail, a data breach, computer virus, phishing, a scam, or paper documents thrown out by you or a business (dumpster diving).

This crime varies widely, and can include

check fraud, credit card fraud, financial identity theft, criminal identity theft, governmental identity theft, and identity fraud.

**MY WALLET OR PDA WAS
LOST OR STOLEN
NOW WHAT?**

Identity theft can be a difficult crime for a victim.

Your life has been altered and you are faced with tasks that may be confusing and situations you don't know

how to handle. All too quickly, you will find that in identity theft cases the burden of proving innocence rests on the shoulders of the victim.

Your neighborhood watch group has discussed this issue, and can provide you with information to protect yourselves of this crime, but first you need to become involved and better prepared.

Join us and let us help you become more better prepared.

CONSUMER ACTION NEEDED IN NATURAL GAS RATE CASES



At the same time household budgets are being stretched thin by the cost of gasoline, the cost of another necessity – natural gas – will likely be high this winter. Some experts predict that natural gas prices will increase to levels that would have been unthinkable prior to the inflated costs that resulted from damage caused by Hurricane Katrina.

In addition to the higher prices consumers are likely to pay for the actual supply of natural gas, Ohio's major natural gas utilities have requested to increase the base rate, or delivery portion of a customer's bill. The base rate includes a flat-rate customer charge as well as a component that varies according to how much natural gas a customer uses.

The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC) is working to represent the customers of the four major natural gas companies in Ohio – Columbia Gas, Dominion East Ohio, Duke Energy and Vectren – and is challenging the rate increases as well as the new cost structures that could go into effect. While the Duke case has been decided by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) and the higher fixed customer charges were approved, opportunities remain for customers of other utilities to speak out.

The OCC is urging residents throughout Ohio to voice their opinions to their local media outlets, newspapers, radio and television as well as at public hearings being conducted by the PUCO in each region.

Those who cannot attend a public hearing in person and have concerns about the rising cost of their natural gas bills are strongly urged to write letters to the PUCO, 180 East Broad Street, Columbus, OH 43215 addressed to the docket number of the specific case involving their natural gas company.

The numbers are as follows:

Dominion East Ohio: 07-0829-GA-AIR
Columbia Gas of Ohio: 08-0072-GA-AIR
Vectren Energy Delivery: 07-1080-GA-AIR

What will happen to rates?

In the Duke Energy rate case, the PUCO approved an increase in the utility's \$6 customer charge to \$15 through Sept. 2008. At that point, consumers will pay \$20.25 per month through June 2009, and \$25.33 every month after that. At the same time, the volumetric rate will go down.

Columbia Gas of Ohio has proposed that its fixed-rate customer charge increase from \$6.50 to \$12.97 during the first year of the new rates. Beginning in the second year, that fixed-rate customer charge would increase to \$19.76.

For Dominion East Ohio customers, the PUCO staff has recommended that the utility's customer charge, \$5.70 in northeast Ohio and \$4.38 in northwest Ohio, be increased to \$17.50 per month.

Vectren has proposed that its current \$7 customer charge be increased to \$10 in the summer months and to \$16.75 in the winter months, beginning in Nov. 2008.

In all of the rate cases, the volumetric rate will decrease as the customer charge is increased. In the case of Columbia Gas, this rate will be eliminated entirely in the second year.

Understanding the Straight-Fixed Variable Rate

These proposed changes to the customer charges are based on a new rate design called the "straight-fixed variable." Major utilities would raise the fixed rate charged to consumers regardless of the amount of natural gas they use. This will remove part of the incentive that residential customers have to conserve natural gas. In addition, low-usage customers will be paying the same fixed rate for their natural gas as heavy-volume users.

If these cases establish higher fixed rate charges, the new structure could cause residents living in small homes to subsidize those in large luxury homes for the delivery portion of their bill. The OCC believes that is not fair and has opposed efforts to adopt these rates.

What Can You Do?

Decision-makers need to hear from those who will be impacted by higher natural gas bills. The OCC encourages participation by anyone who can attend a public hearing in their area. If you are in a situation where the high cost of heating during the winter can create a potential health risk to you or your family, PUCO Commissioners need to hear from you. Testimony will become part of the official record of the case and be considered as the PUCO makes its decision.

This article can be found at www.pickocc.org
Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel
1-877-PICKOCC toll free

Join your neighborhood watch group as we discuss this, along with many other topics that affect all of us in our community.

You can call the Police Dept. to locate a 'watch' group in your area then attend a meeting and sign up!

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

911 Emergencies Only

419/522-1234

419/52-CRIME

Use to report drug dealers, crime suspects, wanted person, past and future crimes

Incidents in which life and/or property is in Immediate danger

**Crimes "in Progress" or that have just occurred
Mansfield Police Department**

**Report suspicious activity or crimes that have already occurred
information on joining a neighborhood watch group
24 Hr. Crime Hotline – Strictly Confidential**

CURFEW HOURS & EXPLANATIONS

Ages 11 and Under , Must be in by Dark

Ages 12 through 15 , Must be in by 11pm

Ages 16 through 17 , Must be in by Midnight

**All children must be with a parent or guardian
if they will be out past the above listed curfew times.**

