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## **ICC Commissioner Edwards Hosts Winter Preparedness Policy Session**

CHICAGO: On Wednesday October 25, The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) hosted representatives from the American Gas Association (AGA), the state's two regional transmission organizations (RTOs), and Illinois local distribution companies for a policy session on winter preparedness. The session featured presentations on readiness for the 2017-2018 winter season and was moderated by ICC Commissioner Sherina Maye Edwards.

“With predictions of exceptionally cold conditions for the upcoming winter season, the performance and capacity of natural gas and electricity systems is vital. The coordination of supply, demand, storage pricing and various pipeline operations is extremely critical to ensure winter preparedness,” said Edwards.

The panelists agreed that there is an adequate gas supply to meet the demand for the 2017-2018 winter season. They also detailed numerous lessons learned from recent weather events including the 2014 Polar Vortex. Those lessons include better communication, long-term planning for wind and natural gas markets, regular readiness workshops and fuel surveys, monthly operational drills, daily coordination calls, and real-time pipeline monitoring.

Experts from PJM Interconnection, the wholesale electricity operator for the northern region of Illinois, testified that forecast models are predicting that the upcoming winter will be colder and wetter when compared to last year. They also testified that the coordination and integration of gas and renewable energy sources has greatly improved in recent years, and winter assessment studies conducted by the operator suggest that they are in a better position to handle increased consumer demand should there be another polar vortex.

Ameren Illinois Company, which serves 1.2 million electric customers and 816,000 natural gas customers in central and southern Illinois, testified that natural gas prices are expected to be similar to

last winter, but if the predicted colder temperatures occur, natural gas usage and home heating costs could rise.

The session also featured discussions on customer outreach efforts, energy efficiency rebate programs, and available resources for low-income customers such as LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program) and other programs offered by individual utility companies. Illinois is expecting \$167.5 Million dollars in federal LIHEAP assistance for 2018.

Click [here](#) to view the Winter Preparedness Policy Session presentations on the ICC website.

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#### About the Illinois Commerce Commission

The Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC) is a quasi-judicial body made up of five Commissioners. Through its Public Utility Program, the Commission oversees the provision of adequate, reliable, efficient and safe utility services at the least possible cost to Illinois citizens served by electric, natural gas, telecommunications, water and sewer public utility companies. Through its Transportation Regulatory Program, the Commission oversees public safety and consumer protection programs with regard to intrastate commercial motor carriers of general freight, household goods movers, relocation towers, safety towers, personal property warehouses and repossession agencies. The Commission's Rail Safety Program also inspects and regulates the general safety of railroad tracks, facilities and equipment in the state.

To learn more about the Commission, its offices and bureaus, click [here](#). If you are a consumer who needs help resolving a utility dispute call 800-524-0795 or file an online complaint [here](#). For a complaint related to transportation, call 217-782-6448.

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