

# Constant Comfort

*A Tradition of Service Since 1912*



# news

SUMMER 2003



*The more cost-efficient four 120-gallon tanks that replaced the failed 1,000-gallon tank.*

## Project Profile...

About a year ago, we were called by a management company that handles a condominium building with a boiler on the roof. A large (1,000 gallon) water tank on the



first floor had failed and was leaking. It was an expensive tank that was larger than

*The condominium building.*

needed, so at a much lower cost, we installed four 120-gallon stainless tanks. We are also eliminating the vibration from a 20-hp fan in their rooftop cooling tower with a variable frequency drive so that a unit owner can be more comfortable in her home.

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Myers Brothers Oil**

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## Oil: Cheaper than Gas

**D**id you ever notice that every winter, especially during a severe winter like we've just endured, that the price of oil becomes a hot topic of conversation. Everyone becomes acutely aware of the cost of a gallon of oil. Even people who heat their homes with gas know when the cost of heating oil is rising and what their neighbors are paying for a gallon of oil. Often the discussion is fueled by media coverage.

The frustrating part of all this is that a homeowner using gas has little or no idea of what he or she is paying for a "therm" of natural gas. They may be able to tell you what their budget payment is each month, but ask them the cost of a therm in comparison to a gallon of oil and they are lost.

To begin with, as a heating source measured in British thermal units (BTUs), a gallon of heating oil produces 40% more energy than a therm of gas. There are 100,000 BTUs in a therm of gas and 140,000 therms in a gallon of oil. A homeowner must use 1.4 therms of gas to generate the heat content of a gallon of oil.

Discovering your cost of a therm is just the beginning of the complex equation to arrive at your cost of gas. A typical utility's gas rate contains a customer charge, a head block, a tail block, a gas adjustable factor and sometimes a local distribution factor. These charges represent the cost of transporting the gas and are how utilities recoup their gas cost and local transportation cost from the previous season.

So, what you have to consider in your search for your gas home heating cost is not the "per therm cost" but all the "add ons" that bring you to your "real costs." After rate increases in November 2002, January 2003 and March 2003, you may be surprised to learn that you are paying 42 cents more per gallon than heating oil customers for 200 therms of energy.

With the amount of effort it takes to find out what you are paying for natural gas, it will never replace the price of oil as a topic of conversation. Maybe somebody wants it this way.

*—thanks to Massachusetts Oilheat Council  
for background information*

## Under Floor Oil Lines

A new state regulation regarding all new under floor lines has been in effect for several years now and we are recommending all our customers abide by it.

To virtually eliminate the possibility of an unseen underground oil leak, the new regulation requires that the oil lines be protected by a continuous plastic sleeve so that any possible oil leaks are visible in your basement. As an alternative, a special oil safety valve may be installed at your tank. We prefer the plastic casing since it not only indicates a leak, but will probably prevent it completely, while the safety valve works only after a leak develops.

All our new installations of boilers or tanks in recent years use this system.

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# We Care. Does KeySpan?

As many of you are aware, the local gas utility has been advertising heavily, promoting its equipment with expensive TV ads. We have had some people ask about these ads and some have signed up for what they thought was a good deal.

Well, first of all, no public corporation will intentionally give anything away without getting a return in the long run. It's called "bait" and, as many a fish has found, it can be dangerous.

Here are some facts for you:

- **Price per heat unit (BTU)** - Oil has consistently been about 15% - 30% less expensive than natural gas, and hedging (buying in the futures market) has enabled us to maintain reasonable pricing during cold winters. The gas utilities' pricing changes in severe

weather and is passed along to you, the consumer.

- **Service** - KeySpan calls itself a "gas distribution company" that has a separate corporation called ServEdge (KeySpan) for servicing gas consumers. They employ one man at night to cover hundreds of thousands of customers in the area north of Boston. Other gas customers in trouble without service contracts are left to shift for themselves, depending upon plumbers (who often don't respond to emergency calls unless they have a long-term customer relationship) or trying to do the work themselves. Plumbing supply companies have many stories of customers coming to them with parts in hand, looking for help, but don't put yourself in that position.

- **Equipment** - Old gas equipment was very reliable, with few parts. Unfortunately, the equipment was inefficient and efforts to make it more efficient also made it less reliable and more difficult to maintain.

- **Attitude** - KeySpan is headquartered in New York. How much do they care if you are laid off, if someone is sick, or your church requests a donation. Their service technicians will rarely see your home again. Will they shut the valve to your leaking toilets, as our men have done? They have no gas competition and they have a mindset that reflects this.

- **Safety** - Gas leaks are still handled by KeySpan employees directly and they are careful, as any gas explosion can cost KeySpan millions. But money cannot bring back people.

Carbon monoxide leaks from bad heating equipment kill several hundred people annually in the United States, and for this reason we strongly recommend carbon monoxide detectors if you have gas in your home.

- **Comfort** - We are interested in your total comfort, and often your comfort depends not upon the fuel you use, but the way it is distributed in your home.

*Remember, your choice of fuel for your home is up to you. Please call us if you have any questions.*

## Oil Lines... *continued from page 1*

The regulation is designed to protect you and the environment from an out of sight, out of mind problem, just as natural gas lines are filled with an odor gas to try to prevent leaks causing explosions. Older oil lines are presently exempt under grandfather clauses, but we recommend upgrading them for your peace of mind. Our insurance company and legal considerations have forced us to eliminate coverage for these older oil lines from our service policy.

We recommend that you consider having us redo your oil lines during your annual tune-up. Simply make the request when you schedule your tune-up appointment. That way we can do it at the lowest cost to you.

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