

Kentucky Energy Watch

Department for Energy Development and Independence

A snapshot of state and national energy issues



Houseboat factory builds modular homes that could revive industry

Dennis Reynolds' new house isn't just a place to live. It's an experiment. The 1,000-square-foot modular home is one of two prototype structures built during the past year in a project to develop highly energy-efficient, relatively low-cost houses that may be built at southern Kentucky factories that ordinarily produce houseboats. Those factories have been hit hard by the recession. Several have closed, and employment is down significantly from before the economic downturn. The project to create a new product for houseboat makers is a partnership of Kentucky Highlands Investment Corp.; the University of Kentucky College of Design, with help from UK's Center for Applied Energy Research; and the Stardust Cruisers houseboat factory in Wayne County. Workers at Stardust built two of the prototypes in 2011, piecing them together on the same lines where houseboats were being built. (Herald-Leader, Jan. 2, 2011)

Federal court orders EPA to delay cross-state pollution rules

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency must delay implementing rules on interstate air pollution on Jan. 1, a federal court ruled, siding with electric power producers seeking to defeat the new regulations. A three-judge panel of the U.S. Appeals Court in Washington granted a request by electric power producers and other challengers to delay the deadline for plants in 27 states, including Texas, to begin reducing emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide while the court considers the rule's legality. "Petitioners have satisfied the standards required for a stay pending court review," Judges Brett Kavanaugh, Thomas Griffith and Janice Rogers Brown said in the brief ruling. (Star-Telegram.com, Dec. 30, 2011)

Nearby residents describe terror of Estill gas-line blast

Lingering flames stopped shooting from a broken gas transmissions pipeline in Estill County on Tuesday, leaving authorities with the task of determining what caused the Monday night explosion that wrecked the line. The blast frightened residents across Estill County, some fearing the nearby Blue Grass Army Depot, which stores large quantities of nerve gas, near Richmond had exploded. No injuries were reported, and most of the 30 to 35 families evacuated after the blast had returned to their homes by late Tuesday, according to the Estill County Emergency Management Agency. But a few homes near the gas line sustained damage such as broken windows or seared siding, officials said. (Herald-Leader, Jan. 4, 2011)

In a first, gas and other fuels are top US export

For the first time, the top export of the United States, the world's biggest gas guzzler, is — wait for it — fuel. Measured in dollars, the nation is on pace this year to ship more gasoline, diesel, and jet fuel than any other single export, according to U.S. Census data going back to 1990. It will also be the first year in more than 60 that America has been a net exporter of these fuels. Just how big of a shift is this? A decade ago, fuel wasn't even among the top 25 exports. And for the last five years, America's top export was aircraft. The trend is significant because for decades the U.S. has relied on huge imports of fuel from Europe in order to meet demand. It only reinforced the image of America as an energy hog. (Associated Press, Dec. 31, 2011)

KY heating program hopes to help more with less

The Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program's splitting less funds among seven Western Kentucky counties this year. Local agencies say they're seeing an increase in need for heating help with not as much to go around. Jenni Haynes stood among long lines Wednesday hoping for help to heat her home this Winter. "This will keep us at least until tax time or a job." Audubon Area Community Coordinator Angie Ditch says this year, the program is starting the "Crisis Assistance" phase with a lot less money. "If we don't receive more, it should be gone by the end of January." Seven counties will split \$300,000. There's no word yet if federal funding will come through. Ditch says it depends on how many apply. "It will probably go pretty fast." Ditch says they will accept applications until all needs are met with the available funds. (14News.com, Jan. 4, 2011)

Solar thermal technology seen bolstering renewable energy adoption

The quest to develop an improved renewable energy storage system is intensifying, as researchers continue to make progress in their drive to spur the adoption of green technology. One of the biggest hurdles facing the widespread adoption of solar panel and wind turbine systems is that they are still reliant on the whims of nature. Solar panel arrays are capable of generating a substantial amount of electricity when the sun is shining, but energy storage technology has not progressed as rapidly, confounding experts. However, engineers are growing increasingly optimistic that solar thermal power could overcome the energy storage obstacles currently facing clean technology companies. (Knovel.com, Jan. 3, 2011)

Eastern Kentucky hospital invests in solar energy

A hospital in eastern Kentucky is the state's first medical facility to get part of its energy from solar panels. Rockcastle Regional Hospital is generating enough electricity to power its entire third floor. There are 210 solar panels on the roof of the hospital, and the panels been producing electricity for the past month. The electricity is sold to Kentucky Utilities, and appears as a credit on the hospital's utility bill. Rockcastle CEO Stephen Estes says using renewable energy for part of the hospital was a small thing the hospital could do to decrease its environmental footprint. "Hospitals are big users, as you well know, of utilities and water and electric and we also create a lot of waste, medical waste," he said. "So I thought our perspective would be that we would see if anybody in this community could go green, the hospital should lead the way." (WFPLNews, Jan. 1, 2011)

Kentucky Retail Fuel Prices (Dollars per gallon)

Product	1/5/2012	12/29/2011	12/22/2011	12/15/2011	Year Ago
Gasoline (State avg.)	3.304	3.256	3.184	3.19	3.064
Ashland	3.413	3.344	3.311	3.331	3.207
Covington	3.397	3.308	3.231	3.238	3.083
Lexington	3.35	3.298	3.27	3.19	3.067
Louisville	3.242	3.263	3.109	3.113	3.055
Owensboro	3.245	3.18	3.161	3.189	3.055
Diesel (State avg.)	3.744	3.767	3.794	3.866	3.25
Ashland	3.795	3.8	3.817	3.89	3.299
Covington	3.751	3.799	3.828	3.911	3.287
Lexington	3.727	3.75	3.801	3.855	3.24
Louisville	3.712	3.731	3.787	3.866	3.218
Owensboro	3.835	3.844	3.965	3.99	3.246

Note: The record high average price for gasoline in Kentucky is \$4.089, reported on July 10, 2008.
 Source: Gasoline (unleaded regular) & Diesel: National AAA,

Product	1/2/2012	12/26/2011	12/19/2011	12/12/2011	Year Ago
Heating Oil (dollars per gallon)	3.844	3.832	3.823	3.866	3.204
Propane (dollars per gallon)	2.865	2.856	2.855	2.851	2.599

Source: the U.S. Energy Information Administration

Wholesale Fuel Prices

Spot Prices	1/5/2012	12/29/2011	12/22/2011	12/5/2011	Year Ago
Crude Oil (Dollars per barrel) <i>West Texas Intermediate, fob</i>	103.22	99.36	98.67	94.95	90.3
Natural Gas (Dollars per MMBtu) <i>Henry-Hub</i>	2.965	3.073	3.035	3.073	4.519

Source: the Wall Street Journal

Futures		12-Feb	12-Mar	12-Apr
Crude Oil (Dollars per barrel) <i>Light Sweet Crude Oil</i>	1/5/2012	103.22	103.40	103.60
	12/29/2011	99.36	99.51	*
	12/22/2011	98.67	98.85	*
Natural Gas (Dollars per MMBtu) <i>Henry-Hub</i>	1/5/2012	3.096	3.127	3.185
	12/29/2011	3.121	3.148	*
	12/22/2011	3.198	3.239	*
Propane (Dollars per gallon) <i>Mt Belvieu (OPIS)</i>	1/5/2012	1.37	1.344	1.33
	12/29/2011	1.389	1.343	*
	12/22/2011	1.342	1.301	*
Coal (Dollars per ton) <i>Central Appalachian</i>	1/5/2012	69.25	69.37	69.55
	12/29/2011	70.22	69.88	*
	12/22/2011	68.87	69	*

Source: CME Group

* - Information Not Available



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