



BRIGHTE IDEAS

A monthly newsletter for BELD customers, February 2006

BELD
Braintree Electric
Light Department
and
BELD Broadband

We CARE about our customers—and we try hard to be responsive to your questions and concerns

This time of year we hear from many customers who need help deciphering their electric bills—here are the answers to their most frequent questions

While there are many positive steps you can take to help lower your fuel usage and make your home more energy-efficient this winter, there are also outside factors affecting your bill that are unrelated to your behavior.

Meter-reading schedule—The simplest reason your bill may go up or down can be linked to **variations in the length of the meter-reading period**. We try to read your meter every 30 days, but weekends, holidays, bad weather, or other scheduling issues can affect that timetable.

As a result, the amount of time between reads may be **as low as 28 days, or as high as 33**. By looking at the **average kWh usage per day** in the lower left-hand corner of your bill, you can determine whether or not your **actual** daily usage has changed.

Estimated bills—Occasionally we are forced to **estimate your bill**. When we do, we base our assumptions on your **usage history**—but this may not always accurately reflect your current usage.

If the estimate turns out to be higher or lower than the actual amount used, **the following bill (based on an actual meter read) will reflect the adjustment**. In other words, if we estimated high, the next bill will be lower; if we estimated low, the following bill will be higher.

Weather patterns—The weather also plays an important role in energy usage—**appliances that heat or cool are among the largest users of electricity**. And even non-electric heating systems use a substantial amount of electricity to power burners, fans, and circulator pumps.

When comparing usage month-to-month, it is important to factor in the **temperature** of the time periods in question. Both heating and cooling loads are measured in degree days. A **“degree day” is a unit of measure for recording how hot or how cold it has been over a 24-hour period**.

The number of degree days applied to a particular day is determined by **comparing the mean temperature for that day** (adding the high and low and dividing by 2) **to a base value of 65 degrees F**. For example, if the mean temperature is 10 degrees lower than 65, there have been 10 **heating degree days**.

Degree day calculations are reported in a **Daily Climate Report** and a **Monthly Weather Summary** published online by the National Weather Service. Those interested in tracking degree day statistics can visit www.weather.gov/climate/index.php.

Of course BELD’s Energy Advisor is always available at 781/348-1032 to help you better understand your electric bill.

Help with winter heating bills is available...

Low-income Braintree residents can get help with their winter heating bills at Quincy Community Action Programs, Inc. (QCAP).

Homeowners and renters—even those whose heating costs are included in their rent—may apply for QCAP’s Fuel Assistance program.

...as is a program that will help you weatherize your home.

BELD has partnered with QCAP to offer home weatherization assistance to Braintree residents.

Call QCAP’s Energy Program at 617/479-8181, ext. 101, to find out whether you qualify for these programs.



www.beld.com
 150 Potter Road
 Braintree, MA 02184
 781/348-BELD (2353)

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PAYMENT LOCATIONS

150 Potter Road
 Our office is open from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Customer Service is open until 7 p.m. on Thursday.

Drop boxes
 Top of Potter Road & Town Hall.

Braintree Cooperative Bank
 1010 Washington St.
 372 Washington St.

Direct Payment
 Call BELD at 781/348-2353.

Online payments
www.beld.com

BROADBAND HELP DESK

Mon-Fri: 8 a.m.-10 p.m.
 Sat-Sun: 8 a.m.-8 p.m.

COMMISSION MEETINGS

Public Meetings are usually held monthly. Call 781/348-2353 or check www.beld.com to confirm time and date.

COMMISSIONERS

Thomas Reynolds, Chair
 Guy Luke, Vice Chair
 Anthony Agnitti, Secretary

HOLIDAY CLOSING

Monday, February 20
 Presidents' Day



Do we have your current phone number?

It's important that we have your current phone number in our system. If you're not sure we do, you can help us by asking a BELD Customer Service Representative to check our records when you call or visit the office.

Here are the latest BELD Broadband numbers!

TOTAL BELD BROADBAND CABLE CUSTOMERS.....5111
Percentage of Braintree households with our cable service.....41%
Percentage of BELD Broadband cable customers with digital service.....92%
Percentage of BELD Broadband cable customers with a Senior package.....31%
Percentage of BELD Broadband digital subscribers with high-def service.....16%
Percentage of BELD Broadband digital subscribers with DVRs.....9%

TOTAL BELD BROADBAND INTERNET CUSTOMERS.....3960
Percentage of Braintree households with our internet service.....32%
Percentage of BELD Broadband internet customers who are Seniors.....19%
Number of e-mail messages processed by our servers daily.....120,000+
Percentage of e-mail messages filtered for viruses or SPAM.....85%

Percentage of our Internet customers who have our cable service.....80%
Percentage of our cable customers who have our internet service.....62%

(All numbers current as of 12/31/05)

COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

The Community Bulletin Board section of this newsletter provides free listings for events sponsored by local non-profit organizations. Information must be submitted by the 5th of the month before the newsletter is mailed—for example, the listing of an event scheduled for December 15 would appear in the November issue, the deadline for which is October 5. Need details? Call 781/348-2332 for additional information.

Children's magic show March 5

Fun for ages four and up! A children's magic show will be performed by John Henry's World of Magic on Sunday, March 5, 3:30 p.m., at St. Francis of Assisi Church Hall. Sponsored by Catholic Daughters of the Americas, Court St. Francis, tickets are \$5 each or \$15 per family. For additional information or to purchase tickets, call 781/848-6484 or 781/843-5917.

AARP Meeting scheduled for March 21

Braintree AARP Chapter #4042 will hold its next meeting on Tuesday, March 21, 1:30 p.m., at the D.A.V. Hall, 788 Liberty Street, Braintree. The program will feature a presentation on the upcoming Braintree Town Election, "Mayor or Town Manager?" Call Frank Bocchino at 781/848-4293 for more information.

Winter assistance program sponsored by Someone Cares Foundation

The Someone Cares Foundation hosted its second annual "Friends Together for a Cause" benefit in November. The funds raised at this event are being used to help the elderly and others who may need fuel assistance, food, or warm clothing during the winter season. For details on how to apply for help this winter, please call the Someone Cares Foundation at 617/827-5215. You can also visit our website at www.someonecaresfoundation.org.

"Spring Fling for Families" March 23

The Council on Aging (COA) Associates, d/b/a Braintree Friends, is planning to jumpstart Spring 2006 with a delicious ziti supper on Thursday, March 23, 5:30 p.m., at the COA Senior Center, 71 Cleveland Avenue. Make your reservations early, as this event is sure to be a sellout! Tickets are \$8 each; two for \$15; children under ten \$5. There will be a raffle of some very desirable items and entertainment by "Suzan." Call the Council on Aging at 781/848-1963.

"Circuit Breaker" tax credit for elders

Are you an elder with high real estate taxes and high water and sewer bills? You may be eligible for a tax credit, the Massachusetts "Circuit Breaker" for elders. Many who have not been required to file Massachusetts Income Taxes may qualify for a credit of up to \$840, simply by filing a state form. Eligibility requirements include:

- Homeowner or renter, not in subsidized housing
- Assessed value of home under \$600,000
- Over 65 years of age (married: one spouse over 65)
- Income limits (including all taxable and non-taxable sources such as Social Security, Disability, Treasury Bills, etc.) as follows:
 Single - under \$45,000
 Head of Household - under \$56,000
 Married, joint return - under \$67,000

Call the Council on Aging at 781/848-1963 to make an appointment with a tax preparer.

**BELD is supporting the Braintree community...
 ...by installing a new underground service to the French House
 at the request of the Braintree Historical Society**