

MIDWEST INFORMATION OFFICE, CHICAGO, IL

For release: Thursday, November 12, 2009

General information: (312) 353-1880 • BLSInfoChicago@bls.gov • www.bls.gov/ro5

Media Contact: Paul LaPorte (312) 353-1138

AVERAGE ENERGY PRICES IN THE CHICAGO AREA – SEPTEMBER 2009

Chicago area consumers paid 27.0 percent less than the U.S. city average for utility (piped) gas and 8.5 percent more than the national average for electricity as measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported today. In contrast, the price for gasoline was only 0.5-percent higher than the national average in the Chicago area. Jay A. Mousa, the Bureau's Regional Commissioner, pointed out that the percentage differential between the local and national price for electricity and gasoline narrowed from a year ago when it was 12.3 percent and 7.1 percent, respectively. Conversely, the differential between the local and national average price for utility (piped) gas widened considerably from September 2008. (See table A.)

Table A. Average prices for utility (piped) gas, gasoline, and electricity, United States and Chicago area, September 2008 and September 2009

	September 2008			September 2009		
	United States	Chicago Area	Percent Difference	United States	Chicago Area	Percent Difference
Utility (piped) gas per therm	\$1.448	\$1.359	-6.1	\$1.028	\$0.750	-27.0
Gasoline per gallon	3.749	4.017	7.1	2.626	2.639	0.5
Electricity (per kWh)	0.130	0.146	12.3	0.130	0.141	8.5

NOTE: a positive percent difference measures how much the price in the Chicago area is above the national price, while a negative difference reflects a lower price in the Chicago area.

A therm—a measure of constant heating value—of utility (piped) gas, commonly referred to as natural gas, in the Chicago area averaged \$0.750 in September 2009, a decrease of 44.8 percent from the previous September. Nationwide, a therm averaged \$1.028 in September 2009, down 29.0 percent over the year. With few exceptions over the past five years, Chicago utility (piped) gas prices have remained well below national prices. (See chart A.)

In September 2009 a gallon of gasoline averaged \$2.639 in the Chicago area, 34.3 percent lower than it was one year ago. The area's decline in the price of gasoline followed the national trend which saw the average price fall 30.0 percent from September 2008 to \$2.626 in September 2009. Though Chicago gasoline prices have been volatile over the past five years, they are typically higher than the U.S. average. (See chart B.)

Chart A. Average prices for utility (piped) gas, United States and Chicago area, September 2004 - September 2009

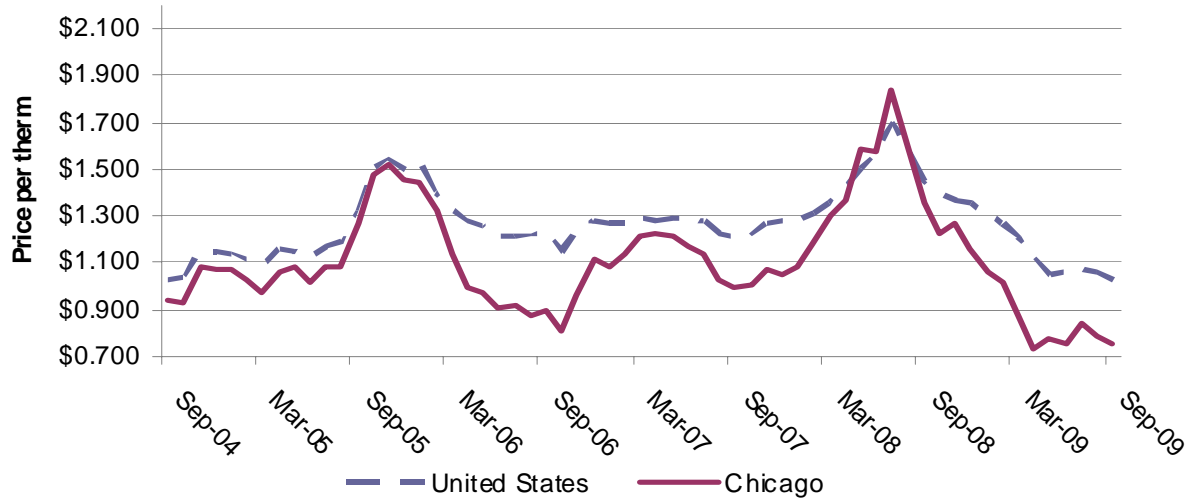


Chart B. Average prices for gasoline, United States and Chicago area, September 2004 - September 2009

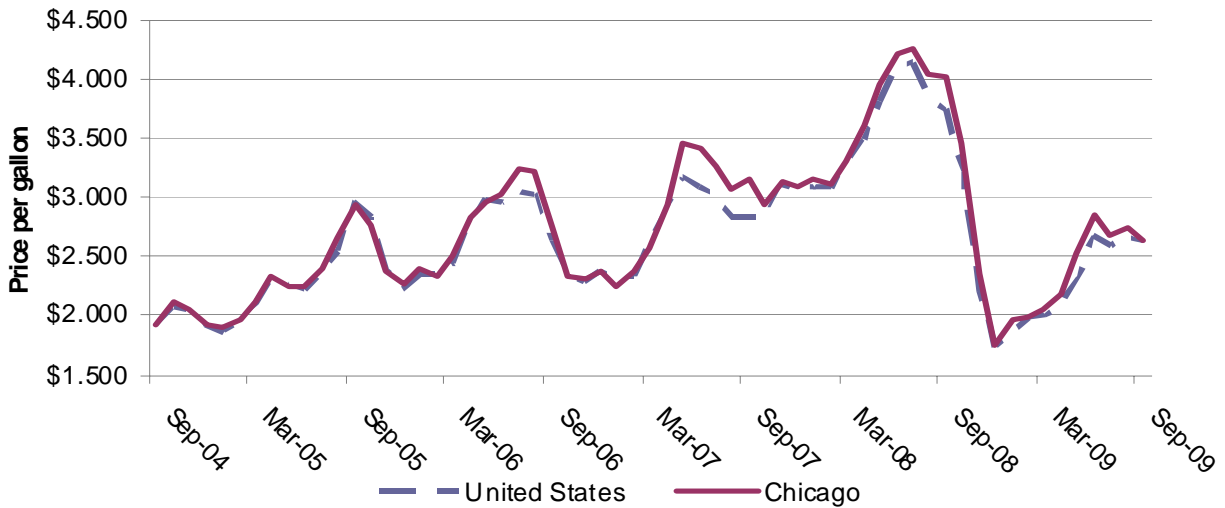
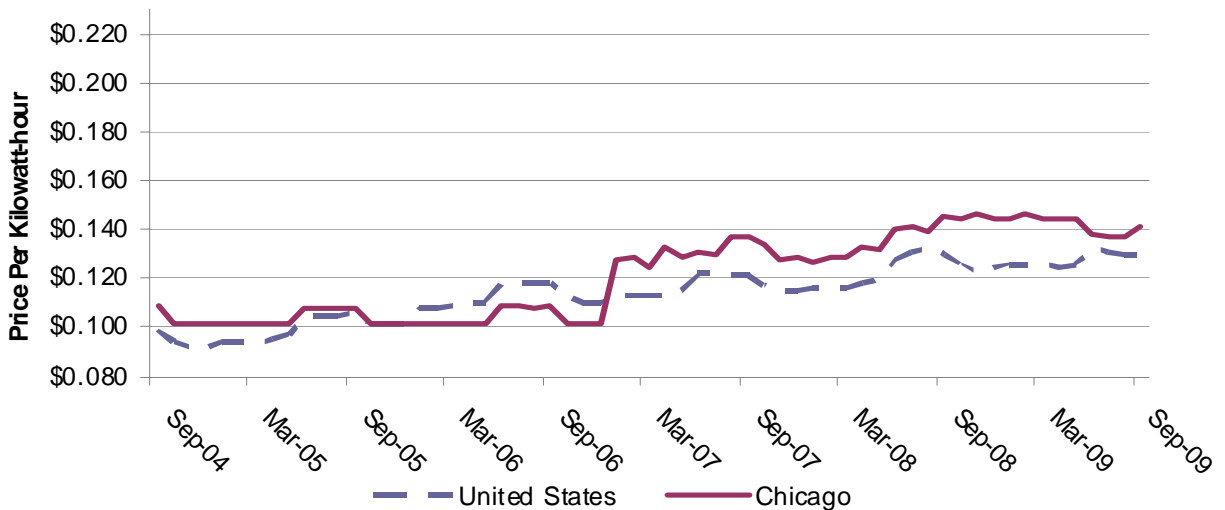


Chart C. Average prices for electricity, United States and Chicago area, September 2004 - September 2009



A kilowatt-hour (kWh) of electricity cost Chicago area consumers \$0.141 in September 2009, 3.4 percent less than it was one year earlier. Nationwide, electricity prices averaged \$0.130 in September 2009 and remained unchanged over the year. Electricity prices have generally trended upwards over the last five years both locally and nationally; however, the difference in prices for Chicago and the nation during this period has narrowed from a high of 2.4 cents per kWh to 1.1 cents per kWh in September 2009. (See chart C.)

Technical Note

Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) Definition:

The Chicago-Gary-Kenosha, IL-IN-WI, Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Area (CMSA) is comprised of Cook, De Kalb, Du Page, Grundy, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties, in Illinois; Lake and Porter Counties in Indiana; and Kenosha County in Wisconsin.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

For personal assistance or further information on CPI data, as well as other Bureau data, contact the Midwest Information Office at 312-353-1880 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Central Time.

Technical Information

Average prices for electricity, utility (piped) gas, and gasoline are published monthly for the U.S. city average, the 4 regions, the 3 population size classes, 10 region/size-class cross-classifications, and the 14 largest local index areas. For electricity, average prices per kilowatt-hour (kWh) and per 500 kWh are published. For utility (piped) gas, average prices per therm, per 40 therms, and per 100 therms are published. For gasoline, the average price per gallon is published. Average prices for commonly available grades of gasoline are published as well as the average price across all grades.

Price quotes for 40 therms and 100 therms of utility (piped) gas and for 500 kWh of electricity are collected in sample outlets for use in the average price programs only. Since they are for specified consumption amounts, they are not used in the CPI. All other price quotes used for average price estimation are regular CPI data.

With the exception of the 40 therms, 100 therms, and 500 kWh price quotes, all eligible prices are converted to a price per normalized quantity. These prices are then used to estimate a price for a defined fixed quantity.

Table 1. Average prices for utility (piped) gas, gasoline, and electricity, United States and Chicago area, September 2008-September 2009, not seasonally adjusted

Year and Month	Utility (piped) gas per therm		Gasoline per gallon		Electricity per kWh	
	United States	Chicago Area	United States	Chicago Area	United States	Chicago Area
2008						
September	\$1.448	\$1.359	\$3.749	\$4.017	\$0.130	\$0.146
October	1.395	1.231	3.225	3.450	0.126	0.145
November	1.372	1.272	2.208	2.347	0.123	0.147
December	1.355	1.163	1.742	1.755	0.124	0.145
2009						
January	1.321	1.060	1.838	1.966	0.126	0.145
February	1.268	1.019	1.979	1.991	0.126	0.147
March	1.208	0.873	2.000	2.061	0.126	0.145
April	1.119	0.733	2.107	2.186	0.125	0.145
May	1.051	0.775	2.314	2.533	0.126	0.144
June	1.060	0.760	2.681	2.862	0.132	0.138
July	1.074	0.840	2.594	2.688	0.131	0.137
August	1.058	0.792	2.677	2.747	0.130	0.137
September	1.028	0.750	2.626	2.639	0.130	0.141