



# OLR RESEARCH REPORT

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## PROPANE PRICE DATA

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You asked (1) whether there was a way to require propane dealers in the state to post their prices on the Internet on a weekly basis and (2) whether Massachusetts, New York, or Rhode Island have such requirements.

### SUMMARY

It appears that the state could require propane dealers to post their prices on the Internet but there may be practical difficulties in making the data collected under such a requirement useful to consumers. Neither Massachusetts, New York, or Rhode Island have such a requirement, although the state energy offices in Massachusetts and New York, as well as Connecticut, post statewide average propane prices on their agency websites.

### POSTING PROPANE PRICES ON THE INTERNET

CGS § [16a-22h](#) requires large propane and heating oil dealers to report to the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) secretary, on request, the amount of fuel they have in storage and other non-price data. CGS § [16a-22i](#) additionally allows the OPM secretary to require any company engaged in the sale or storage of propane or other petroleum products to provide additional information on the price, sales, or inventory of such products if conditions in the market require this information for OPM to conduct a complete analysis. It appears that the

secretary could require weekly price information from propane dealers under this provision. The law does not address whether OPM could (1) require dealers to post this information on their websites or (2) post this information on OPM's website.

As a practical matter, the legislature would have to provide OPM (or another agency requiring the posting of the information) with a sanction if a dealer refused to post the information or posted false information. Ray Wilson, head of OPM's energy unit, notes that propane dealers often charge a variety of prices, differentiating between existing and new customers, delivery amount, and other factors. This could complicate the price information displayed on the Internet. Moreover, there appears to be no way to prevent a dealer from changing his or her price once he or she posted the data, although the legislation could require the dealer to constantly update the posting to reflect current prices.

None of Connecticut's neighboring states require propane dealers to post their prices on the Internet. The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources has a [propane website](#) that provides the weekly statewide average price per gallon, as well as the high and low price in the state. The data are based on telephone surveys of dealers who serve Massachusetts households and are based on the average winter fill-up of 100 to 150 gallons or more. The site notes that dealers may charge more per gallon for fill-ups under 100 gallons. The survey does not reflect any discount provided to customers who pay cash.

Similarly, the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority posts average prices on its propane [website](#). It provides information for the state as a whole and six regions where propane is widely used. It provides the credit price for full service residential customers, who typically use 1,100 or more gallons of propane annually. Dealers are surveyed weekly from September through March and twice per month during the rest of the year.

The [website](#) of Rhode Island's Office of Energy Resources has weekly statewide average prices for heating oil and gasoline, but not propane.

In Connecticut, OPM posts various energy prices on its [weekly energy report website](#). The report includes the statewide average price per gallon for propane, with data going back three years. OPM obtains the data by calling propane dealers in the state, with the understanding that individual dealer data will not be disclosed. Wilson believes that dealers would be unwilling to voluntarily report price data if their individual prices were posted on the OPM website.

## **LINKS**

Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources:

[http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eoeaterminal&L=4&L0=Home&L1=Energy%2c+Utilities+%26+Clean+Technologies&L2=Home+Heating&L3=Propane&sid=Eoeea&b=terminalcontent&f=doer\\_fuels\\_propane&csid=Eoeea](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eoeaterminal&L=4&L0=Home&L1=Energy%2c+Utilities+%26+Clean+Technologies&L2=Home+Heating&L3=Propane&sid=Eoeea&b=terminalcontent&f=doer_fuels_propane&csid=Eoeea)

New York State Energy Research and Development Authority:

[http://www.nyserda.org/energy\\_information/nyepf.asp](http://www.nyserda.org/energy_information/nyepf.asp)

Rhode Island's Office of Energy Resources:

<http://www.energy.ri.gov/news/energyprices/index.php>

OPM weekly energy report:

<http://www.ct.gov/opm/cwp/view.asp?a=2994&q=422270>

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