

Renters Should Ask - Gas vs. Electric Heat

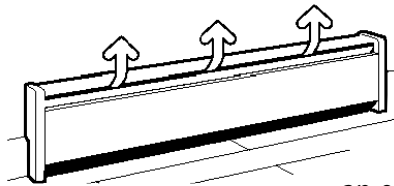
Some renters are surprised at the size of their gas and electric bill, especially during the cold winter months. Here are three questions to ask before you rent in order to avoid unpleasant surprises:

First, who pays for heat?

Second, is the apartment heated by electricity or gas?

Electricity costs about twice as much as natural gas, for the same amount of heat. If an apartment is heated by electricity, it's especially important to call the utility company to find out about past electric bills at that address. Ask for the average monthly utility cost for the apartment you are considering. Use this as an estimate of what you'll pay. If the utilities are supplied by Madison Gas and Electric Company, you can call 252-7222 or the Spanish Line at 252-7120.

If you're not sure what type of heat it is, ask the rental agent. Here's another way to tell: apartments with



electric heat typically have more than one thermostat. Each thermostat controls an electric heater that runs

along the baseboard where the wall meets the floor.

Third, who pays for hot water?

Sometimes the landlord pays for hot water, and sometimes tenants pay. Hot water is often the second biggest part of your utility bill, so it's important to ask this question before renting. Again, call the utility company to find out what past gas and electric bills have been for that address.

If you are considering buying a home, ask the seller or realtor whether the water heater is gas or electric. Gas water heaters and clothes dryers cost about half as much to operate compared to electric ones. If you need to purchase a new furnace, water heater or clothes dryer in the future, always consider gas over electric. You will save energy and money.

How to save if you have electric heat

If you only have one thermostat: Set the temperature lower when you are sleeping or gone.

If you have more than one thermostat: Set the temperature lower in unused rooms and close the door.

The bigger the setback, the more you save. However, when deciding how much to set back the temperature, keep in mind how long it will take the room to warm back up when deciding how much to set back the temperature.

Typical Monthly Costs

	Gas	Electric
Clothes dryer	\$ 4.00	\$ 13.31
Heat	\$70.00	\$140.00
Water heater (standard efficiency)	\$28.75	\$ 55.25

For more ways to save on your utility bills, call 252-7117.