

**11:18 17Mar10 RTRS-POLL-U.S. NATURAL GAS INVENTORIES SEEN DOWN 28 BCF FOR WEEK ENDED MARCH 12**

11:21 17Mar10 RTRS-POLL-US natgas stocks seen down 28 bcf in weekly EIAs  
NEW YORK, March 17 (Reuters) - U.S. natural gas storage levels are expected to fall by 28 billion cubic feet when weekly data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration are released early Thursday, according to a Reuters poll.

In the weekly survey of 28 industry traders and analysts, withdrawal estimates for the week ended March 12 ranged from 11 bcf to 44 bcf.

Stocks fell an adjusted 42 bcf during the same week last year. The five-year average decline for that week is 65 bcf.

The median draw in the survey was 27 bcf.

The EIA storage report will be issued Thursday at 10:30 a.m. EDT (1430 GMT).

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said there were 122 heating degree days last week, 50 warmer than the previous week, 24 warmer than normal and eight warmer than the same week last year.

Degree days, a measure of departure in the mean daily temperature from 65 Fahrenheit (18 Celsius), are used to reflect demand for energy to heat or cool homes and businesses.

In the last report, overall storage fell 111 bcf, in line with the Reuters estimate of 109 bcf, the year-ago decline of 111 bcf and the five-year average drop of 109 bcf.

Last week's EIA report showed total domestic gas inventories of 1.626 trillion cubic feet stood at 71 bcf, or 4 percent, below last year but still 19 bcf, or 1 percent, above the five-year average.

Eastern storage shed 72 bcf in the last report but climbed to 10 percent above last year's levels.

Consuming Region West storage, which lost 7 bcf for the week, slipped to about even with the same year-ago week.

Inventories in the Producing Region dropped 32 bcf and fell to 21 percent below the same week in 2009.

A total draw Thursday at the Reuters survey estimate would narrow the storage deficit compared with last year to 57 bcf.

In the previous four reports, total stocks fell 589 bcf, or 147 bcf per week, versus a 346-bcf adjusted decline for the same one-month period last year and a 494-bcf five-year average drop for that period.

NOAA said it expected 96 heating degree days this week, 36 warmer than normal and 12 warmer than the same year-ago week.

Early estimates for next week's EIA report range from a draw of 16 bcf to a build of 6 bcf, versus an adjusted decline of 1 bcf for the same week last year and a five-year average drop for that week of 37 bcf.

Storage hit an all-time high of 3.837 tcf in late November, but has dropped sharply since December as frigid weather over much of the nation lifted space heating needs.

Total storage draws of nearly 2.1 tcf from December through February ran about 26 percent above average, but mild weather in March has slowed the pace.

If drawdowns for the rest of the heating season match the five-year average pace, inventories will end winter at 1.505 tcf, or about 1 percent above normal.

The following is a partial list of forecasters who participated in this week's survey. If forecasters provided a range, the midpoint was used. Numbers in billion cubic feet

(bcf).

Advantage IQ	-	27
<b>Caprock</b>	-	<b>33</b>
CH Guernsey	-	35
Citi Futures	-	35
enerjay	-	44
FirstEnergy	-	29
First Enercast	-	11
Gelber & Assoc	-	38
Hencorp	-	24
IAF Advisors	-	22
ICAP Energy	-	25
Lind-Waldock	-	21
MF Global	-	33
PFGBest	-	11
Raymond James	-	42
Ritterbusch & Assoc	-	18
SMC Forecasting	-	39
Stephen Smith Energy	-	27
Strategic Energy	-	21
Summit Energy	-	28
Tradition Energy	-	42

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