

**11:46 23Sep2009 RTRS-UPDATE 1-POLL-US natgas stocks seen up 68 bcf in weekly EIAs
(Adds weather data, background, table)**

NEW YORK, Sept 23 (Reuters) - U.S. natural gas storage levels are expected to rise by 68 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 24 industry traders and analysts, injection estimates for the week ended Sept. 18 ranged from 61 bcf to 78 bcf.

Stocks rose an adjusted 54 bcf for the same week last year, while the five-year average gain for that week is 69 bcf.

The median build in the survey was also 68 bcf.

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

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said there were 40 cooling degree days last week, five cooler than the previous week and one cooler than the same week in 2008 but five warmer than normal.

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

In the last report, overall storage rose 66 bcf, below the Reuters survey estimate of 73 bcf and the five-year average increase for that week of 82 bcf but slightly above the adjusted year-ago gain of 65 bcf.

Last week's EIA report showed that total domestic gas inventories climbed further into record high territory for this time of year, hitting 3.458 trillion cubic feet, and at current build rates, are just two weeks away from breaking the record high of 3.565 tcf set in 2007.

EIA recently raised its estimate of aggregate peak natural gas storage capacity by 100 bcf, or 2.6 percent, to 3.889 tcf due to the addition of new facilities, capacity expansions at some existing facilities, and greater use of existing facilities over the past year.

Most analysts expect total storage to hit all-time highs above 3.8 tcf by winter, and some still expect inventories to test the limits of aggregate peak capacity this year.

EIA also said total working gas design capacity, a measure based on the theoretical peak of each storage field, increased, climbing 177 bcf, or 4.3 percent, to 4.313 tcf.

Total inventories stand at 496 bcf, or 17 percent, above last year and 487 bcf, or 16 percent, above the five-year average, and the huge cushion means there should be no supply shortfalls even if winter turns out to be cold. [ID:nPRWPI54]

Eastern stocks gained 45 bcf in the last report but eased to 6 percent above last year's levels.

Consuming Region West storage rose 10 bcf for the week but slipped to 19 percent above the same year-ago week.

Stocks in the West are just 6 bcf shy of breaking the regional high of 478 bcf from November 2007.

Inventories in the Producing Region climbed 11 bcf to a new all-time high of 1.110 tcf and edged up to 39 percent above the same week in 2008.

A total build Thursday at the Reuters estimate would increase the storage surplus to last year to 510 bcf.

In the previous four reports, total stocks rose 254 bcf, or 64 bcf per week, versus a 320 bcf adjusted gain for the same one-month period last year and a 280 bcf five-year average build for that period.

NOAA said it expected 47 cooling degree days this week, 19 warmer than normal and 16 warmer than the same year-ago week.

Early injection estimates for next week's EIA report range from 59 bcf to 70 bcf versus an 82 bcf adjusted increase for the same week in 2008.

If weekly builds match the five-year average for the remaining seven weeks of the stock building season, storage will begin this winter with a record high 3.865 tcf in the ground, easily eclipsing the previous high of 3.565 tcf set on Oct. 31, 2007.

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).

Caprock	+ 66
CH Guernsey	+ 74
Citi Futures	+ 78
enerjay	+ 69
FC Stone	+ 68
First Enercast	+ 68
Gelber & Assoc	+ 70
Hencorp	+ 65
IHS Global Insight	+ 61
MF Global	+ 68
PFGBest	+ 63
Prestige Economics	+ 72
Raymond James	+ 66
Ritterbusch & Assoc	+ 64
SMC Forecasting	+ 72
Societe Generale	+ 66
Stephen Smith Energy	+ 68
Strategic Energy	+ 68
Summit Energy	+ 71
Tradition Energy	+ 64

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Regards,

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