

**12:17 30Sep2009 RTRS-UPDATE 1-POLL-US natgas stocks seen up 61 bcf in weekly EIAs
(Adds weather data, background, table)**

NEW YORK, Sept 30 (Reuters) - U.S. natural gas storage levels are expected to rise by 61 billion cubic feet when weekly data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration is released early Thursday, according to a Reuters poll.

In the weekly survey of 26 industry traders and analysts, injection estimates for the week ended Sept. 25 ranged from 56 bcf to 67 bcf.

Stocks rose an adjusted 82 bcf for the same week last year, while the five-year average gain for that week is 68 bcf.

The median build in the survey was 62 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 43 cooling degree days last week, three warmer than the previous week, 15 warmer than normal and 16 warmer than the same week in 2008.

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

In the last report, overall storage rose 67 bcf, just below the Reuters survey estimate of 68 bcf and the five-year average increase for that week of 69 bcf but above the adjusted year-ago gain of 54 bcf.

Last week's EIA report showed that total domestic gas inventories climbed further into record high territory for this time of year, hitting 3.525 trillion cubic feet.

This week total stocks should break the all-time high of 3.565 tcf set in 2007. Producing Region and West Region stocks have already hit all-time highs.

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 stocks to test the limits of aggregate peak capacity this year at 3.9 tcf.

Total inventories stand at 509 bcf, or 17 percent, above last year and 485 bcf, or 16 percent, above the five-year average. The huge cushion means there should be no supply shortfalls even if winter turns out to be cold. [ID:nPRWPI54]

Eastern stocks gained 41 bcf in the last report and climbed to 7 percent above last year's levels.

Consuming Region West storage rose 10 bcf for the week but slipped to 18 percent above the same year-ago week.

Stocks in the West hit a record high last week of 482 bcf, breaking the previous the regional high of 478 bcf from 2007.

Inventories in the Producing Region climbed 16 bcf to a new all-time high of 1.126 tcf and edged up to 40 percent above the same week in 2008.

A total build Thursday at the Reuters estimate would trim the storage surplus to last year to 488 bcf.

In the previous four reports, total stocks rose 267 bcf, or 67 bcf per week, versus a 274 bcf adjusted gain for the same one-month period last year and a 282 bcf five-year average

build for that period.

NOAA said it expected 22 cooling degree days this week, about normal for the period but two cooler than the same year-ago week. NOAA also predicted 31 heating degree days this week, 19 cooler than the previous week, five cooler than the same week last year but four warmer than normal.

Early injection estimates for next week's EIA report range from 50 bcf to 65 bcf versus an 87 bcf adjusted increase for the same week in 2008.

If weekly builds match the five-year average for the remaining six weeks of the stock building season, storage will begin this winter with a record high 3.863 tcf in the ground.

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	+ 56
CH Guernsey	+ 63
Citi Futures	+ 60
enerjay	+ 66
FC Stone	+ 62
First Enercast	+ 59
Gelber & Assoc	+ 62
Hencorp	+ 60
IHS Global Insight	+ 65
JPMorgan	+ 61
MF Global	+ 57
Prestige Economics	+ 60
Raymond James	+ 58
Ritterbusch & Assoc	+ 59
SMC Forecasting	+ 65
Societe Generale	+ 63
Stephen Smith Energy	+ 63
Strategic Energy	+ 67
Summit Energy	+ 58
Tradition Energy	+ 62

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