

**12:14 24Feb10 RTRS-POLL-U.S. NATURAL GAS INVENTORIES SEEN DOWN 169 BCF FOR WEEK ENDED FEB 19**

**12:21 24Feb10 RTRS-POLL-US natgas stocks seen down 169 bcf in wkly EIAs**

NEW YORK, Feb 24 (Reuters) - U.S. natural gas storage levels are expected to fall by 169 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 28 industry traders and analysts, withdrawal estimates for the week ended Feb. 19 ranged from 150 bcf to 179 bcf.

Stocks fell an adjusted 90 bcf for the same week last year. The five-year average drop for that week is 132 bcf.

The median draw in the survey was 170 bcf.

The EIA storage report will be issued Thursday at about 10:30 a.m. EST (1530 GMT).

The U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration said there were 196 heating degree days last week, 29 warmer than the previous week but 16 colder than normal and 10 colder than the same week last year.

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 homes and businesses in winter and cool them in summer.

In the last report, overall storage fell 190 bcf, matching the Reuters estimate of 190 bcf but well above the year-ago decline of 44 bcf and the five-year average drop for that week of 129 bcf.

Last week's EIA report showed total domestic gas inventories slid to 2.025 trillion cubic feet, still 26 bcf, or 1 percent, above last year and 53 bcf, or 3 percent above the five-year average.

Eastern storage shed 105 bcf in the last report and fell to 8 percent above last year's levels.

Consuming Region West storage, which lost 22 bcf for the week, eased to about 3 percent above the same year-ago week.

Inventories in the Producing Region dropped 63 bcf and fell to 8

percent below the same week in 2009.

A total draw Thursday at the Reuters estimate would erase the surplus to last year and leave stocks at a 53 bcf deficit to year-ago, the first deficit to year-ago in 13 months.

In the previous four reports, total stocks fell 582 bcf, or 146 bcf per week, versus a 586 bcf adjusted decline for the same one-month period last year and a 641 bcf five-year average drop for that period.

NOAA said it expected 183 heating degree days this week, 15 colder than normal and 17 colder than the same year-ago week.

Early withdrawal estimates for next week's EIA report range from 132 bcf to 160 bcf, versus an adjusted decline of 101 bcf for the same week last year.

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 in December and January were nearly 30 percent above average, and another strong tally was expected in February, as steady cold weather continued to kick up demand and trim stocks from the record highs seen in early winter.

If drawdowns for the rest of the heating season match the five-year average pace, inventories will end winter at 1.539, or about 3.6 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	- 179
<b>Caprock</b>	<b>- 173</b>
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