

**11:27 03Mar10 RTRS-POLL-U.S. NATURAL GAS INVENTORIES SEEN DOWN 131 BCF FOR WEEK ENDED FEB 26**

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NEW YORK, March 3 (Reuters) - U.S. natural gas storage levels are expected to fall by 131 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, withdrawal estimates for the week ended Feb. 26 ranged from 117 bcf to 155 bcf.

Stocks fell an adjusted 101 bcf during the same week last year. The five-year average decline for that week is 124 bcf.

The median draw in the survey was 129 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 188 heating degree days last week, 8 warmer than the previous week but 20 colder than normal and 16 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 or cool homes and businesses.

In the last report, overall storage fell 172 bcf, above the Reuters estimate of 169 bcf and well above the year-ago decline of 90 bcf and the five-year average drop for that week of 132 bcf.

Last week's EIA report showed total domestic gas inventories of 1.853 trillion cubic feet stood at 56 bcf, or 3 percent, below last year -- the first time below year-ago levels in 13 months -- and just 13 bcf, or 1 percent, above the

five-year average.

Traders expect current stocks to fall below the five-year average in next week's report.

Eastern storage shed 95 bcf in the last report and fell to 6 percent above last year's levels.

Consuming Region West storage, which lost 11 bcf for the week, edged up to 4 percent above the same year-ago week.

Inventories in the Producing Region dropped 66 bcf and slid to 16 percent below the same week in 2009.

A total draw Thursday at the Reuters estimate would widen the storage deficit to last year to about 86 bcf.

In the previous four reports, total stocks fell 668 bcf, or 167 bcf per week, versus a 492 bcf adjusted decline for the same one-month period last year and a 594 bcf five-year average drop for that period.

NOAA's forecast for HDDs this week was not fully updated on its website.

Early withdrawal estimates for next week's EIA report range from 112 bcf to 137 bcf, versus an adjusted decline of 111 bcf for the same week last year and a five-year average drop of 109 bcf for that week.

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.

Storage draws in December and January totaled nearly 30 percent above average, and estimated pulls in February of more than 670 bcf would also run about 28 percent above the norm.

If drawdowns for the rest of the heating season match the five-year average pace, inventories will end winter at 1.499 tcf, or almost 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	- 125
<b>Caprock</b>	<b>- 141</b>
CH Guernsey	- 147
Citi Futures	- 150
enerjay	- 117
FC Stone	- 132
FirstEnergy	- 155
First Enercast	- 129
Gelber & Assoc	- 130
Hencorp	- 117
IAF Advisors	- 120
Lind-Waldock	- 124
MF Global	- 138
PFGBest	- 140
Prestige Economics	- 125
Raymond James	- 125
Ritterbusch & Assoc	- 125
SMC Forecasting	- 152
Stephen Smith Energy	- 128
Strategic Energy	- 122
Summit Energy	- 130

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