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U.S. Energy Information
Administration

Glossary

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Browse terms related to these fuel groups:

alternative fuels

coal

electricity

natural gas

nuclear

petroleum

renewable

B

Backup fuel: In a central heat pump system, the fuel used in the furnace that takes over the space heating when the outdoor temperature drops below that which is feasible to operate a heat pump.

Backup generator: A generator that is used only for test purposes, or in the event of an emergency, such as a shortage of power needed to meet customer load requirements.

Backup power: Electric energy supplied by a utility to replace power and energy lost during an unscheduled equipment outage.

Balancing authority (electric): The responsible entity that integrates resource plans ahead of time, maintains load-interchange-generation balance within a Balancing Authority Area, and supports Interconnection frequency in real time. NERC definition [↗](#)

Balancing item: Represents differences between the sum of the components of natural gas supply and the sum of the components of natural gas disposition. These differences may be due to quantities lost or to the effects of data reporting problems. Reporting problems include differences due to the net result of conversions off low data metered at varying temperature and pressure bases and converted to a standard temperature and pressure base; the effect of variations in company accounting and billing practices; differences between billing cycle and calendar period time frames; and imbalances resulting from the merger of data reporting systems that vary in scope, format, definitions, and type of respondents.

Barrel: A unit of volume equal to 42 U.S. gallons.

Barrels per calendar day: The amount of input that a distillation facility can process under usual operating conditions. The amount is expressed in terms of capacity during a 24-hour period and reduces the maximum processing capability of all units at the facility under continuous operation (see Barrels per Stream Day) to account for the following limitations that may delay, interrupt, or slow down production. 1. the capability of downstream processing units to absorb the output of crude oil processing facilities of a given refinery. No reduction is necessary for intermediate streams that are distributed to other than downstream facilities as part of a refinery's normal operation; 2. the types and grades of inputs to be processed; 3. the types and grades of products expected to be manufactured; 4. the environmental constraints associated with refinery operations; 5. the reduction of capacity for scheduled downtime due to such conditions as routine inspection, maintenance, repairs, and turnaround; and 6. the reduction of capacity for unscheduled downtime due to such conditions as mechanical problems, repairs, and slowdowns.

Barrels per stream day: The maximum number of barrels of input that a distillation facility can process within a 24-hour period when running at full capacity under optimal crude and product slate conditions with no allowance for downtime.

Base bill: A charge calculated by taking the rate from the appropriate electric rate schedule and applying it to the level of consumption.

Base gas: The quantity of natural gas needed to maintain adequate reservoir pressures and deliverability rates throughout the withdrawal season. Base gas usually is not withdrawn and remains in the reservoir. All natural gas native to a depleted reservoir is included in the base gas volume.

Base load: The minimum amount of electric power delivered or required over a given period of time at a steady rate.

Base load capacity: The generating equipment normally operated to serve loads on an around-the-clock basis.

Base load plant: A plant, usually housing high-efficiency steam-electric units, which is normally operated to take all or part of the minimum load of a system, and which consequently produces electricity at an essentially constant rate and runs continuously. These units are operated to maximize system mechanical and thermal efficiency and minimize system operating costs.

Base period: The period of time for which data used as the base of an index number, or other ratio, have been collected. This period is frequently one of a year but it may be as short as one day or as long as the average of a group of years. The length of the base period is governed by the nature of the material under review, the purpose for which the index number (or ratio) is being compiled, and the desire to use a period as free as possible from abnormal influences in order to avoid bias.

Base rate: A fixed kilowatthour charge for electricity consumed that is independent of other charges and/or adjustments.

Baseboard heater: As a type of heating equipment, a system in which either electric resistance coils or finned tubes carrying steam or hot water are mounted behind shallow panels along baseboards. Baseboards rely on passive convection to distribute heated air in the space. Electric baseboards are an example of an "Individual Space Heater."

bbi: The abbreviation for barrel(s).

bbi/d: The abbreviation for barrel(s) per day.

bbi/sd: The abbreviation for barrel(s) per stream day.

bcf: The abbreviation for billion cubic feet.

Benzene (C₆H₆): An aromatic hydrocarbon present in small proportion in some crude oils and made commercially from petroleum by the catalytic reforming of naphthenes in petroleum naphtha. Also made from coal in the manufacture of coke. Used as a solvent in the manufacture of detergents, synthetic fibers, petrochemicals, and as a component of high-octane gasoline.

Bi-fuel vehicle: A motor vehicle that operates on two different fuels, but not on a mixture of the fuels. Each fuel is stored in a separate tank.

Bilateral agreement: A written statement signed by two parties that specifies the terms for exchanging energy.

Bilateral energy transaction: A transaction between two willing parties who enter into a physical or financial agreement to trade energy commodities. Bilateral transactions entail reciprocal obligations and can involve direct negotiations or deals made through brokers.

Billing period: The time between meter readings. It does not refer to the time when the bill was sent or when the payment was to have been received. In some cases, the billing period is the same as the billing cycle that corresponds closely (within several days) to meter-reading dates. For fuel oil and LPG, the billing period is the number of days between fuel deliveries.

Biodiesel: A fuel typically made from soybean, canola, or other vegetable oils; animal fats; and recycled grease. It can serve as a substitute for petroleum-derived diesel or distillate fuel. For EIA reporting, it is a fuel composed of mono-alkyl esters of long chain

fatty acids derived from vegetable oils or animal fats, designated B100, and meeting the requirements of ASTM (American Society for Testing materials) D 6751.

Biofuels: Liquid fuels and blending components produced from biomass feedstocks, used primarily for transportation.

Biogenic: Produced by biological processes of living organisms. Note: EIA uses the term "biogenic" to refer only to organic nonfossil material of biological origin.

Biogenic emissions: Emissions that are naturally occurring and are not significantly affected by human actions or activity.

Biomass: Organic nonfossil material of biological origin constituting a renewable energy source.

Biomass gas: A medium Btu gas containing methane and carbon dioxide, resulting from the action of microorganisms on organic materials such as a landfill.

Biomass waste: Organic non-fossil material of biological origin that is a byproduct or a discarded product. Biomass waste includes municipal solid waste from biogenic sources, landfill gas, sludge waste, agricultural crop byproducts, straw, and other biomass solids, liquids, and gases; but excludes wood and wood-derived fuels (including black liquor), biofuels feedstock, biodiesel, and fuel ethanol. **Note:** EIA biomass waste data also include energy crops grown specifically for energy production, which would not normally constitute waste.

Biomass-based diesel fuel: Biodiesel and other renewable diesel fuel or diesel fuel blending components derived from biomass, but excluding renewable diesel fuel coprocessed with petroleum feedstocks.

Bitumen: A naturally occurring viscous mixture, mainly of hydrocarbons heavier than pentane, that may contain sulphur compounds and that, in its natural occurring viscous state, is not recoverable at a commercial rate through a well.

Bituminous coal: A dense coal, usually black, sometimes dark brown, often with well-defined bands of bright and dull material, used primarily as fuel in steam-electric power generation, with substantial quantities also used for heat and power applications in manufacturing and to make coke. Bituminous coal is the most abundant coal in active U.S. mining regions. Its moisture content usually is less than 20 percent. The heat content of bituminous coal ranges from 21 to 30 million Btu per ton on a moist, mineral-matter-free basis. The heat content of bituminous coal consumed in the United States averages 24 million Btu per ton, on the as-received basis (i.e., containing both inherent moisture and mineral matter).

Black liquor: A by product of the paper production process, alkaline spent liquor, that can be used as a source of energy. Alkaline spent liquor is removed from the digesters in the process of chemically pulping wood. After evaporation, the residual "black" liquor is burned as a fuel in a recovery furnace that permits the recovery of certain basic chemicals.

Black lung benefits: In the content of the coal operation statement of income, this term refers to all payments, including taxes, made by the company attributable to Black Lung.

Blast furnace: A furnace in which solid fuel (coke) is burned with an air blast to smelt ore.

Blast-furnace gas: The waste combustible gas generated in a blast furnace when iron ore is being reduced with coke to metallic iron. It is commonly used as a fuel within steel works.

Blending components: See Motor gasoline blending components.

Blending plant: A facility that has no refining capability but is either capable of producing finished motor gasoline through mechanical blending or blends oxygenates with motor gasoline.

Block-rate structure: An electric rates schedule with a provision for charging a different unit cost for various increasing blocks of demand for energy. A reduced rate may be charged on succeeding blocks.

BLS: Bureau of Labor Statistics within the U.S. Department of Labor

BOE: Barrels of Oil Equivalent (used internationally)

Boiler: A device for generating steam for power, processing, or heating purposes; or hot water for heating purposes or hot water supply. Heat from an external combustion source is transmitted to a fluid contained within the tubes found in the boiler shell. This fluid is delivered to an end-use at a desired pressure, temperature, and quality.

Boiler fuel: An energy source to produce heat that is transferred to the boiler vessel in order to generate steam or hot water. Fossil fuel is the primary energy source used to produce heat for boilers.

Boiling-water reactor (BWR): A light-water reactor in which water, used as both coolant and moderator, is allowed to boil in the core. The resulting steam can be used directly to drive a turbine.

Bonded petroleum imports: Petroleum imported and entered into Customs bonded storage. These imports are not included in the import statistics until they are (1) withdrawn from storage free of duty for use as fuel for vessels and aircraft engaged in international trade; or (2) withdrawn from storage with duty paid for domestic use.

Bone coal: Coal with a high ash content; it is dull in appearance, hard, and compact.

Book value: The portion of the carrying value (other than the portion associated with tangible assets) prorated in each accounting period, for financial reporting purposes, to the extracted portion of an economic interest in a wasting natural resource.

Booked costs: Costs allocated or assigned to inter-departmental or intra company transactions, such as on-system or synthetic natural gas (SNG) production and company-owned gas used in gas operations and recorded in company books or records for accounting and/or regulatory purposes.

Borderline customer: A customer located in the service area of one utility, but supplied by a neighboring utility through an arrangement between the utilities.

Bottled gas: See Liquefied petroleum gases.

Bottled gas, LPG, or propane: Any fuel gas supplied to a building in liquid form, such as liquefied petroleum gas, propane, or butane. It is usually delivered by tank truck and stored near the building in a tank or cylinder until used.

Bottom ash: Residue mainly from the coal burning process that falls to the bottom of the boiler for removal and disposal.

Bottom-hole contribution: A payment (either in cash or in acreage) that is required by agreement when a test well is drilled to a specified depth regardless of the outcome of the well and that is made in exchange for well and evaluation data.

Bottoming cycle: A waste-heat recovery boiler recaptures the unused energy and uses it to produce steam to drive a steam turbine generator to produce electricity.

bp: The abbreviation for boiling point.

Branded product: A refined petroleum product sold by a refiner with the understanding that the purchaser has the right to resell the product under a trademark, trade name, service mark, or other identifying symbol or names owned by such refiner.

Break-even cutoff grade: The lowest grade of material that can be mined and processed considering all applicable costs, without incurring a loss or gaining a profit.

Breccia: A coarse-grained clastic rock, composed of angular broken rock fragments held together by a mineral cement or in a fine-grained matrix.

Breeder reactor: A reactor that both produces and consumes fissionable fuel, especially one that creates more fuel than it consumes. The new fissionable material is created by a process known as breeding, in which neutrons from fission are captured in fertile materials.

Breeze: The fine screenings from crushed coke. Usually breeze will pass through a 1/2-inch or 3/4-inch screen opening. It is most often used as a fuel source in the process of agglomerating iron ore.

British thermal unit: The quantity of heat required to raise the temperature of 1 pound of liquid water by 1 degree Fahrenheit at the temperature at which water has its greatest density (approximately 39 degrees Fahrenheit).

Btu: The abbreviation for British Thermal Unit(s).

Btu conversion factor: A factor for converting energy data between one unit of measurement and British thermal units (Btu). Btu conversion factors are generally used to convert energy data from physical units of measure (such as barrels, cubic feet, or short tons) into the energy-equivalent measure of Btu. (See <http://www.eia.gov/totalenergy/data/monthly/pdf/sec13.pdf> for further information on Btu conversion factors.)

Btu per cubic foot: The total heating value, expressed in Btu, produced by the combustion, at constant pressure, of the amount of the gas that would occupy a volume of 1 cubic foot at a temperature of 60 degrees F if saturated with water vapor and under a pressure equivalent to that of 30 inches of mercury at 32 degrees F and under standard gravitational force (980.665 cm. per sec. squared) with air of the same temperature and pressure as the gas, when the products of combustion are cooled to the initial temperature of gas and air when the water formed by combustion is condensed to the liquid state. (Sometimes called gross heating value or total heating value.)

BTX: The acronym for the commercial petroleum aromatics-- benzene, toluene, and xylene.

Budget plan: An agreement between the household and the utility company or fuel supplier that allows the household to pay the same amount for fuel for each month for a number of months.

Building shell (envelope) DSM program: A DSM program that promotes reduction of energy consumption through improvements to the building envelope. Includes installations of insulation, weather stripping, caulking, window film, and window replacement. (Also see DSM, Demand-Side Management Programs.)

Building shell conservation feature: A building feature designed to reduce energy loss or gain through the shell or envelope of the building. Data collected by EIA on the following specific building shell energy conservation features: roof, ceiling, or wall insulation; storm windows or double- or triple-paned glass (multiple glazing); tinted or reflective glass or shading films; exterior or interior shadings or awnings; and weather stripping or caulking. (See Roof or Ceiling Insulation, Wall Insulation, Reflective or Shading Glass or Film, Storm Window or Triple-Paned Glass, Building Shell (Envelope), and Weather Stripping or Caulking.)

Built-in electric units: An individual-resistance electric-heating unit that is permanently installed in the floors, walls, ceilings, or baseboards and is part of the electrical installation of the building. Electric-heating devices that are plugged into an electric socket or outlet are not considered built in. (Also see Heating Equipment.)

Bulk power transactions: The wholesale sale, purchase, and interchange of electricity among electric utilities. Bulk power transactions are used by electric utilities for many different aspects of electric utility operations, from maintaining load to reducing costs.

Bulk sales: Wholesale sales of gasoline in individual transactions which exceed the size of a truckload.

Bulk station: A facility used primarily for the storage and/or marketing of petroleum products, which has a total bulk storage capacity of less than 50,000 barrels and receives its petroleum products by tank car or truck.

Bulk terminal: A facility used primarily for the storage and/or marketing of petroleum products, which has a total bulk storage capacity of 50,000 barrels or more and/or receives petroleum products by tanker, barge, or pipeline.

Bundled utility service (electric): A means of operation whereby energy, transmission, and distribution services, as well as ancillary and retail services, are provided by one entity.

Bunker fuels: Fuel supplied to ships and aircraft, both domestic and foreign, consisting primarily of residual and distillate fuel oil for ships and kerosene-based jet fuel for aircraft. The term "international bunker fuels" is used to denote the consumption of fuel for international transport activities. Note: For the purposes of greenhouse gas emissions inventories, data on emissions from combustion of international bunker fuels are subtracted from national emissions totals. Historically, bunker fuels have meant only ship fuel.

Burn days: The number of days the station could continue to operate by burning coal already on hand assuming no additional deliveries of coal and an average consumption rate.

Burnup: Amount of thermal energy generated per unit mass of fuel, expressed as Gigawatt-Days Thermal per Metric Ton of Initial Heavy Metal (GWDT/MTIHM), rounded to the nearest gigawatt day.

Bus: An electrical conductor that serves as a common connection for two or more electrical circuits.

Butane (C₄H₁₀): A straight-chain or branch-chain hydrocarbon extracted from natural gas or refinery gas streams, which is gaseous at standard temperature and pressure. It includes isobutane and normal butane and is designated in ASTM Specification D1835 and Gas Processors Association specifications for commercial butane.

Butylene (C₄H₈): An olefinic hydrocarbon recovered from refinery or petrochemical processes, which is gaseous at standard temperature and pressure. Butylene is used in the production of gasoline and various petrochemical products.

Buy-back oil: Crude oil acquired from a host government whereby a portion of the government's ownership interest in the crude oil produced in that country may or should be purchased by the producing firm.

BWR: Boiling-Water Reactor

Bypassed footage: Bypassed footage is the footage in that section of hole that is abandoned as the result of remedial sidetrack drilling operations.

Byproduct: A secondary or additional product resulting from the feedstock use of energy or the processing of nonenergy materials. For example, the more common byproducts of coke ovens are coal gas, tar, and a mixture of benzene, toluene, and xylenes (BTX).

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

[↑ Top](#)