

News

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Oil Hike a Crude Awakening for Those on a Tight Budget

More applying for help from the Salvation Army

Reporter: Brian New

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Although the price fell Wednesday, many predict a barrel of crude oil will hit \$100 this week. When oil prices go up, it affects the price of nearly everything we buy.

Motorists are preparing for the possibility of \$4 a gallon gas down the road as the price of crude oil hit a new high this week. Compared to a year ago, the price of gas is up nearly 40%.

If it was any other product, that kind of increase would be unthinkable.

If you want to know what it's like to live on a tight budget, ask Rilma Hummel of Omaha. She's been doing it for 78 years. "I was born during the depression, so I know a little bit about how that goes."

The only wheels Hummel uses these days are on ones on her chair, but her budget is still affected by the price of oil. "Everything is going up and so I am quite concerned about that."

Like hundreds of others, Hummel is applying for financial help this holiday season from the Salvation Army. This year, there's been an 18% increase in assistance applications. The price of oil is a big reason why.

"Not only do they want to buy their loved ones Christmas presents, now what little they have has to go for fuel for their cars or homes, so it's a double whammy for many people," says the Salvation Army's Linda Burkle.

It's not all doom and gloom. Gasoline may be up, but natural gas prices are flat. M.U.D. says homeowners should see little to no increase in their heating bills this winter.

"Natural gas is primarily produced here in the United States while two-thirds of our crude oil is imported from overseas, so world events don't have the impact on natural gas like they do on crude oil," says M.U.D.'s Jim Knight.

That still doesn't make up for the price increase in oil. Hummel says she'll manage. It might not be easy, but for her it never has been.

The Salvation Army is holding its annual holiday assistance sign-up through Friday from 9-11:30 a.m. and 1-3:30 p.m. at its headquarters at 3612 Cuming Street. No appointment is needed.

You need to bring the following items: Documentation of income, social security card or birth certificate and a picture ID. If you have questions, call 898-5966.