

Heating-Season Outlook for Fuel Distributors

Amphibian Publishing · issued from data through August 2026 · heating degree days, base 65°F, as percent of the 1991-2020 normal

Bottom line for the Northeast and Midwest: a milder-than-normal start to the heating season is favoured. Our outlook puts NDJ 2026-27 heating demand at about 98% of normal in the Northeast and 97% in the Midwest (about normal demand in the Northeast). A very strong El Niño is the driver; it usually keeps the northern tier milder than normal through winter, with the coldest departures confined to the southern Plains.

Heating degree days, percent of normal (population-weighted)

Region	OND 2026	NDJ 2026-27
Northeast	96% (4% below normal)	98% (near normal)
Midwest	97% (3% below normal)	97% (3% below normal)
South	97% (3% below normal)	102% (near normal)
West	93% (7% below normal)	95% (5% below normal)
Lower 48	96% (4% below normal)	98% (2% below normal)

100% = the 1991-2020 average season. Recent seasons have averaged about 95-97% of that normal because winters have warmed, so compare the figures with your own recent years, not only with the long-term normal.

What it means for deliveries

- **Volume:** a season at 96% of normal needs about 4% fewer gallons than an average 1991-2020 season for the same customer base, and roughly the same as the last few winters.
- **Timing:** seasonal odds say nothing about individual cold snaps. A mild season can still hold a two-week arctic outbreak that drives a surge of will-call orders; keep the usual reserve.
- **Confidence:** as a single regional number this is a central estimate, not a precise forecast. Tested over 1950-2025 it cuts the error of the seasonal degree-day estimate by only a few percent compared with assuming the recent 15-year average (about 1% in the long record, 3-5% for the Northeast and Midwest since 2012). The real information is the direction of the lean and the pattern behind it, and the division-level odds on the map; use the percent as a planning anchor, not as a trading signal.

How we compare with NOAA

NOAA's Climate Prediction Center favours above-normal temperature over the northern tier as well; its outlook is more cautious (fewer areas with a lean). Our temperature outlooks have scored higher than NOAA's over 173 seasons since 2012 on the standard skill score, mostly because we commit to a call over more of the map; where NOAA commits it is about as accurate. Every season is scored publicly at amphibianpublishing.com/outlook/verification.

Available monthly

Heating degree days as percent of normal for your delivery territory (any of the 344 NOAA climate divisions, or your own list of counties), two seasons ahead, with the plain-language pattern note, updated each month around the 10th and again after NOAA's mid-month release. Contact: outlook@amphibianpublishing.com.

Amphibian Publishing is independent and not affiliated with or endorsed by NOAA or the National Weather Service. Degree-day history: NOAA NCEI climate divisions. This is guidance on seasonal odds for planning; it is not a price forecast and not advice to buy or sell fuel or hedges.