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Adjustments to be made to meet change in demand for gas

Town gas demand set to fall in heartland, rise across S'pore as economy reopens: SP Group

Choo Yun Ting

Utilities firm SP Group will be adjusting the gas transmission and distribution network over the next few weeks in the light of changing gas demands as Singapore enters phase two of its reopening.

It expects that demand for town gas will fall in the heartland and rise across the island as food and beverage outlets resume walk-in operations, shops reopen and more people go back to work on-site.

Mr Alex Yeo, the section head who manages the gas system control centre in Senoko, noted that sensors in the gas network will alert engineers to changes in demand so that supply can be re-calibrated.

There was a 10 per cent overall fall in demand for town gas during the circuit breaker, largely due to the closure of some commercial and industrial operations, SP Group said.

However, a spike in peak demand was observed during lunch and dinner hours, with more residents staying at home and cooking meals than before Covid-19 hit.

The typical lunch peak was from about 11am to 2pm, while the dinner high was from 5pm to 8pm.

Gas consumption is typically "very low" in the wee hours from midnight to 5am, Mr Yeo added.

Town gas is mainly used for cooking and heating by residential and commercial users.

There was also a notable shift in demand from areas that typically

see heavier loads, such as the city centre and Changi Airport, towards the heartland and high-density neighbourhoods like Punggol and Sengkang.

This led the operator to implement its current strategy, which involves increasing the gas pressures within the transmission and distribution network for residential and industrial customers.

It also installed additional sensors along the network between February and early March so it could better monitor load demand during the coronavirus pandemic.

Simulations were conducted as well to make sure the new strategy was effective before it was implemented in early April.

It has since been fine-tuned to meet changing consumer demand over the past two months, such as during the fasting month of Ramadan where there was a sharper peak in the evenings.

Further adjustments are ahead:



A member of the SP Group gas operations team at an offtake station conducting checks on the gas regulators. The utilities firm is adjusting the gas pressures within the transmission and distribution network for residential and industrial customers as Singapore enters phase two of its reopening. PHOTO: SP GROUP

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With students headed back to school full time from June 29 and more workers likely to return to the office, a redistribution of residential demand for town gas is expected.

Additional tweaks will be made to the network strategy as data is collected on changes in demand.

Mr Yeo, who oversees staff who operate three eight-hour shifts around the clock at the control centre, said most adjustments to the offtake station are made remotely from the centre and indicators such as gas flow rates can be monitored in real time from there as well.

Technicians and engineers con-

duct monthly physical checks on the equipment at offtake stations.

While the operator is used to adjusting according to demand – for example, festive seasons such as Ramadan and Chinese New Year mean a spike in gas usage around meal hours – the changes due to the coronavirus pandemic are different, with sharper peaks during meal hours.

"It is a very delicate process, because we have to monitor (the changes) closely and every response has to be fine-tuned along the way," said Mr Yeo.

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