

Thermal Conversion Factors

The thermal conversion factors presented in the following tables can be used to estimate the heat content in British thermal units (Btu) of a given amount of energy measured in physical units, such as barrels or cubic feet. For example, 10 barrels of asphalt has a heat content of approximately 66.36 million Btu (10 barrels x 6.636 million Btu per barrel = 66.36 million Btu).

The heat content rates (i.e., thermal conversion factors) provided in this section represent the gross (or higher or upper) energy content of the fuels. Gross heat content rates are applied in all Btu calculations for the *Monthly Energy Review* and are commonly used in energy calculations in the United States; net (or lower) heat content rates are typically used in European energy calculations. The difference between the two rates is the amount of energy that is consumed to vaporize water that is created during the combustion process. Generally, the difference ranges from 2 percent to 10 percent, depending on the specific fuel and its hydrogen content. Some fuels, such as unseasoned wood, can be more than 40 percent different in their gross

and net heat content rates. See “Heat Content” and “British Thermal Unit (Btu)” in the Glossary for more information.

Thermal conversion factors for hydrocarbon mixes (Table A1) are weighted averages of the thermal conversion factors for each hydrocarbon included in the mix. For example, in calculating the thermal conversion factor for a 60-40 butane-propane mixture, the thermal conversion factor for butane is weighted 1.5 times the thermal conversion factor for propane.

In general, the annual thermal conversion factors presented in Tables A2 through A6 are computed from final annual data or from the best available data and labeled “preliminary.” Often, the previous year’s factor is used as a preliminary value until data become available to calculate the factor appropriate to the year. The source of each factor is described in the section entitled “Thermal Conversion Factor Source Documentation,” which follows Table A6 in this appendix.

Table A1. Approximate Heat Content of Petroleum Products
(Million Btu per Barrel)

Petroleum Product	Heat Content	Petroleum Product	Heat Content
Asphalt	6.636	Natural Gasoline and Isopentane	4.620
Aviation Gasoline	5.048	Pentanes Plus	4.620
Butane	4.326	Petrochemical Feedstocks	
Butane-Propane Mixture ^a	4.130	Naptha Less Than 401°F	5.248
Distillate Fuel Oil	5.825	Other Oils Equal to or Greater Than 401°F	5.825
Ethane	3.082	Still Gas	6.000
Ethane-Propane Mixture ^b	3.308	Petroleum Coke	6.024
Isobutane	3.974	Plant Condensate	5.418
Jet Fuel, Kerosene Type	5.670	Propane	3.836
Jet Fuel, Naptha Type	5.355	Residual Fuel Oil	6.287
Kerosene	5.670	Road Oil	6.636
Lubricants	6.065	Special Naphthas	5.248
Motor Gasoline		Still Gas	6.000
Conventional ^c	5.253	Unfinished Oils	5.825
Reformulated ^c	5.150	Unfractionated Stream	5.418
Oxygenated ^c	5.150	Waxes	5.537
Fuel Ethanol ^d	3.539	Miscellaneous	5.796

^a 60 percent butane and 40 percent propane.

^b 70 percent ethane and 30 percent propane.

^c See Table A3 for motor gasoline annual weighted averages beginning in 1994.

^d Fuel ethanol, which is derived from agricultural feedstocks (primarily corn), is not a petroleum product but is blended into motor gasoline.

Web Page: http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/mer/append_a.html.

Sources: See “Thermal Conversion Factor Source Documentation,” which follows Table A6.