



Black gold.... Wyoming coal futures for '06 trade are at half again last July's prices, pumped up by continuing railroad troubles. **High shipping costs** in uncompetitive rail markets and **derailments** with resulting track damage last spring are now joined by heavy **October rains** washing out Kansas tracks and delaying deliveries for power plants still trying to replenish supplies. Some Kansas and Missouri utilities have nearly run out and have leaned on wholesale markets, boosting demand for electricity generated from **natural gas**, which is already at record prices as heating season begins. Backlogged coal deliveries could persist next year, industry observers say. **Despite headlines**, increased **oil prices** take a back seat to natural gas. Oil prices are up about 60 percent this year; natural gas almost doubles that, rising 115 percent. **A triple threat in California**, as the state energy commission sees a fresh—and broader—crisis adding natural gas and gasoline to past electricity woes. Isolated by geography and regulation, the commission says, California's growing energy demand is on a collision course with its inadequate, aging infrastructure.