



Making Energy Cents

There are many simple steps you can take right now to make a large difference in your electric bill.

Be a Draft Dodger

- Test your home for air leaks (hold a lit candle to the window on a windy day). A leak will need to be caulked or sealed. You can also keep the blustery cold air out by stopping drafts at windows and doors. Place a draft dodger — a long fabric tube — along the edges where cold seeps inside to stop it in its tracks.
- Check your attic, stairway, garage walls and basement to make sure that your home is properly insulated. (I will be sending out a guide to dealing with air leaks and insulation shortly)
- If you don't use your fireplace, seal it and put a plant in front of it.
- A quarter-inch gap at the bottom of a standard door can lose as much energy loss as a 3-inch-by-3-inch hole in the wall, energy experts say.

Hot Water Heater

- According to the experts, setting your water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit is adequate for most households. This setting is about midway between the low and medium settings. Typically water heaters are set at 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Each 10-degree reduction in water temperature generally will save about THREE percent on your monthly water-heating costs. Actually 125 degrees is sufficient to kill bacteria
- Wrap your hot water heater in an insulating jacket and insulate the hot water pipes. You can get material for this at the hardware store.
- You can also add a thermostat to adjust the heat level of the heater if you are away for long periods of time.
- If you need a new heater there are new tankless or “on-demand” hot water heaters that are the most efficient choice you can make.

Heating/cooling syste

- Find a professional to help you repair and replace leaky air ducts and to insure that the airflow distribution system serving your heating system is operating at peak efficiency.
- Make sure that your air ducts are wrapped with insulation under the house.

- Schedule a bi-annual tune-up for your heat-pump. You may enter into a yearly contract with a HVAC company to provide this service. They will clean or replace filters on forced-air furnaces and heat pumps.
- Install a programmable thermostat on your HVAC to control your costs and comfort needs. Any electrician can do it
- Prune your shrubs so they do not block the airflow for your heat pump.
- Install air conditioners on the shaded side of a house....not in the sun

Shut Your Doors

- Close your foundation vents in the winter if there is a crawl space under your home.
- Close doors to rooms that you do not use.
- Close vents to rooms you are not using.

Light bulbs

- Use compact fluorescent bulbs in place of incandescent bulbs...inside and out.
- They are a little weird looking and expensive but will well be worth the price.
- Install timers on your lights inside your home and install motion detectors on outside lights. This will improve security while reducing costs.

Furnace

- Furnaces need a bi-yearly tune-up and cleaning. An easy, do-it-yourself furnace tune-up involves changing or cleaning the filters monthly during the heating season.
- Electronic air-cleaning filters require more frequent changing, but do a better job of purifying the air and keeping the furnace running efficiently. Use pleated filters, especially if someone in the house has allergies or asthma. The filters are a bit more expensive, but they do an excellent job of removing dust, mold spores, and other allergens.
- Keeping the furnace's pilot light lit all summer wastes a lot of energy. Simply shut off the pilot light during the off season.

Circulation year round

- Remember ceiling fans work well to help promote energy efficiency and move air year-round.

Your Laundry Room

The Washing Machine

- ❑ To improve the efficiency of a washer, check the intake hoses on the back to make sure that the filter screen is not clogged. Keep these, and other screens clear to keep clothes their cleanest.
- ❑ Prevent possible clogs by making a lint screen for a washer's drain hose (great if you have a dog or cat that sheds). Secure an old thin sock or the foot of a pair of pantyhose to the end of the drain hose with a strong rubber band. When the washer drains, the sock will collect the lint in the wash water. Turn the sock inside out, clean it out and toss the lint in the trash.
- ❑ The washing machine itself needs cleaning occasionally. Pour a gallon of distilled vinegar into the machine and run it empty through a wash cycle to remove built-up residue.
- ❑ If replacing your washing machine, you should consider a new front-load machine. It will drastically reduce water consumption so you will save not only water but detergents and softeners.

The Dryer

- ❑ Make sure the lint trap of a dryer is clean each time a load of clothes goes inside.
- ❑ Try to run the dryer continuously if you're doing more than one load. This way the dryer stays at its desired heat temperature. Waiting between loads will allow the dryer to cool down, and it will take more energy to bring it back up to operating temperature.
- ❑ A washer's energy consumption depends on the temperature of water used. Try using the "warm" setting instead of "hot." Clothes often look and smell as clean when washed in warm water. I use cold water with special detergent...I mean how dirty do our clothes really get? This also puts less wear on the clothing.
- ❑ Only operate the washer and dryer with a full load.
- ❑ Let's bring back the clothesline...remember how good the sheets smelled. My mother used to drape our sheets over the boxwood.

Kitchen

- ❑ Clean your refrigerator coils yearly and try to make sure it is not located near a stove or dishwasher, which can make it work harder.
- ❑ To conserve energy when cooking in the kitchen, only use preheating for baking or when cooking a meal that takes less than an hour.
- ❑ Look for the Energy Star Label

Energy Star-qualified refrigerators use about half as much energy as refrigerators made before 1993, and saving energy also cuts down on pollution. Look for Energy Star certification when shopping for other home appliances such as dishwashers, clothes washers, water heaters and many home electronics. Visit www.energystar.gov/ for more information about this program.

Get Unplugged

- ❑ Many home electronics still consume energy even when they are turned off. Many devices with a "standby mode" will continue to use power, running up your electricity bill. Also, chargers and power adapters continue to draw power from the wall socket even if the device is not attached. Unplug these devices or use a power strip to turn off multiple units, when they aren't being used to make sure that you aren't wasting energy.
- ❑ Remove the screen saver off your computer. When those flying toasters are activated on your screen, the computer is still running on full power. Instead, put your computer in "sleep" or "standby" mode, so the stroke of a key will wake up your PC right away.

The Bathroom

- ❑ Water Resistant Materials in Showers – All of the material concealed behind and under showers and wet areas are made of a cementitious product that is extremely decay resistant. This improves durability in case of a water leak and reduces the potential for mold growth.
- ❑ In the bathroom, the toilet is the major water-consuming appliance. The new 1.6-gallon toilets, mandated by law, reduce the water usage by about half of what the older 3-gallon toilet tanks use each time the toilet is flushed.
- ❑ And if you are not ready to replace you existing toilets...flush less and think about the environment you are saving.
- ❑ To save water without buying a new toilet, fill a half-gallon plastic bottle with water or sand, recap it and put it in the tank. Don't use bricks because they will eventually disintegrate. This is my favorite tip.
- ❑ A dripping faucet or a running toilet can waste a huge amount of water each month. One drip a second adds up to 200 gallons of water wasted in a month and 2,400 gallons in a year. Always repair plumbing fixtures promptly. (A running toilet cost me \$1,000 one year)
- ❑ There are some obvious signs that a toilet is leaking water. Some signs to look for include the following: The toilet makes sounds when it's not in use. The handle must be held down for the tank to empty. Water drips out of the refill tube into the overflow pipe. The handle must be jiggled to make the toilet stop running. The water runs for about 15 seconds for no apparent reason. Water can be seen trickling down the sides of the bowl long after it was last flushed.

Hot water

☐ Changing habits when using water in the bathroom can really pay off quickly. With the cost of water rising in most areas, it is important to conserve as much as possible without drastically changing our lives. Taking a three-minute shower uses nine gallons of water, as opposed to a bath, which takes 36 gallons. Even a seven-minute shower uses half the water of a 15-minute shower and less water than the average bath.

☐ Do not let the water run while shaving or brushing the teeth. Letting the faucet run wastes at least five gallons of water. Turn it off between rinses.

☐ Some inexpensive hardware helps to save water as well as the energy to heat it. A "faucet-flow controller," which is available at hardware and home stores, cuts the stream of water by as much as four gallons a minute with minimum loss of spray force.

☐ Try using a low-flow showerhead to conserve water. These come in two styles. Aerating models form a misty spray by mixing air with the water and laminar flow models form distinct streams of water. Both types will save water and expenses.

There is a test to see if a showerhead wastes hot water. Hold a clean, empty half-gallon milk carton under the shower spray. If the carton fills in less than 10 seconds, then the showerhead is wasting water. A low-flow shower can solve this problem without a noticeable difference in the quality of the showering experience. On the average home yields a little over 200 gallons of water.

I will have many new updates on energy.. If you would like to be added to the email list please let me know at susanpomerantz@comcast.net

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