



Consumer Alert

The ABCs of Summer Energy Bill Savings



The increased need for power in the warm weather months coupled with rising prices reinforces the need to use electricity as efficiently as possible.

If every household and business takes a few steps to reduce electricity usage, short-term electric supply problems may be avoided and we may all receive lower utility bills.

And, yes, it is true. Even small actions can help us stop wasting energy and save. For example, "Sleep" features that power down home office equipment and other electronic devices that are turned on but not in use can save households up to \$70 annually.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) encourages all consumers to help avoid the power crunch that can occur during warm weather months. With just a few minor adjustments in our leisure, personal, and business lives we can all do our part to help ensure adequate electric supplies for Michigan this summer and limit the utilities' need to purchase more expensive supplies from elsewhere. Below are the ABC's to energy savings that will help you reduce your energy bills and stay cool.

Avoid activities that add heat or humidity to your home. For example, simply let dishes air dry rather than use the dishwasher's heater.

Block the sun by closing the curtains and shades.

Clean air conditioner filters and coils every month to make them more energy efficient.

Dry your clothes on a line. This might remind you of days past, but not only will your clothes smell air-fresh, you will save on energy. Not ready to take the dry-line plunge for all your clothes? Start small with towels and t-shirts.

Electronic appliances should be placed on sleep mode or turned off when not in use.

Fans can make the use of an air conditioner unnecessary, and they are cheaper to operate. Ceiling fans, for example, can make a room feel six to seven degrees cooler.

Grill out or have a picnic. Cooking outdoors places the heat outside rather than inside your home.

Hand operated can openers, knives, and toothbrushes use a lot less electricity than their automatic counterparts.

Insulate your home, particularly in the attic. By insulating the attic, you will keep the heat outside from filtering through the roof and into the rest of your house.

Just use a thermos to keep your coffee or tea warm instead of keeping the pot on all day.

Keeping the freezer full, but not overcrowded, will help prevent "cold" air loss. If your freezer has a lot of empty space, make ice containers.

Lower your hot water heater to medium or 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Microwaves, toaster ovens, and convection ovens are best for cooking indoors. Not only do they use less energy, but they also reduce the amount of heat build-up in the home.

New appliances on the horizon? Purchase energy-efficient models. Energy Star appliances might cost more initially, but the savings over time are well worth it.

Open the windows on moderate temperature days. Cross ventilation is good to have and can help make your home breezy.

Plant leafy trees and shrubs that shield the house from direct sunlight.

Quit opening and closing those doors! Sounds like something mom used to say, but it is true. Keep outer doors shut to keep the heat out on hot days and try not to leave the refrigerator door open too long -- otherwise it just runs harder.

Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent.

Seal air leaks around doors and windows.

Turn up the thermostat when you are not at home or away for an extended period of time. Better yet, get a programmable thermostat.

Unplug certain appliances when not in use. Cell phone and MP3 chargers are major culprits for wasting energy. Unplug the TV and other major appliances, too, when they aren't in use.

Vents and doors should be closed for unoccupied rooms if they don't need cooling.

Wash full loads of dishes and clothes. Also, use new cold-water detergents to wash clothes with cold water.

X-amine your appliances and home on a regular basis, at least once a month. Use this opportunity to change filters, replace bulbs, dust, and check seals around windows and doors.

Yahtzee, Scrabble, and Sudoku use a lot less electricity than the TV. So, the next time you reach for a remote, reach for a board game or crossword puzzle instead.

Zip right through these tips? Additional information can be found at your local library or online at <http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/> and www.michigan.gov/mpscalerts.

