

Save Energy With Central Lighting Control



Central lighting control systems allow you to program special light levels for reading or watching movies.

Photo courtesy of Lutron Electronics Inc.

Q: *My electric bills are high. I think some type of central lighting control might help me use fewer lights. Would this save electricity or cost more to operate?*

A: Lighting can account for a substantial portion of your monthly electric bill, not to mention the cost to replace light bulbs and the cost of the fixtures.

There is also a secondary energy cost to lighting. Nearly all of the electricity used by incandescent bulbs ends up

as heat in a room. Having several light bulbs on can be equivalent to running an electric space heater on a low setting. During summer, this extra heat makes the air conditioner run longer. During winter, the heat from lights helps heat your house, but at a much less efficient rate than a heat pump.

By replacing incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent lights (CFLs), your lighting produces 75 percent less heat, uses one-third less energy and lasts much longer.

Central lighting controls are another efficient way to reduce lighting costs. The potential energy savings from installing even a simple central lighting control system are more than most people realize. If a lighting control system allows you to conveniently switch lights on only when needed, your total lighting use reduces greatly. Most lighting control units use little electricity themselves.

The security of your home also improves with a central light control system. You can switch on exterior and interior lights from your car as you pull into your driveway. Variable timers switching lights on and off can make a would-be thief think someone is home.

Central lighting systems also group various lights and brightness settings—a great and efficient convenience. Most control systems also include light-dimming features for lamps. When

reading in the evening, program a “reading” button on the control to provide brightness where are you sitting, dimming the lights elsewhere. If you plan to watch movies, program a “movie” button. This turns off and dims other lights for the best view of your television.

Built-in timer controls allow you to program the timing of lighting changes, or you can make changes manually. You may want to have the lights slowly brighten in the morning at a certain time instead of being awakened by an alarm.

Many of the do-it-yourself central lighting controls use Z-Wave technology to communicate with individual lighting control modules throughout your house. The central control often runs on batteries. The lighting modules plug into standard wall outlets, with lamps and appliances plugging into the module. Z-Wave wall switch modules are available to replace standard wall switches.

If you use CFLs, make sure your lighting controls work with them. Some controls require standard incandescent bulb filaments to operate properly. For lights that are only on for short periods or need to be dimmed often, incandescent bulbs may work best.

The following companies offer efficient lighting controls:

- Intermatic
(815) 675-7000
www.intermatic.com
- Jasco Products
(800) 654-8483
www.jascoproducts.com
- Lightolier
(214) 647-7880
www.lolcontrols.com
- Lutron
(610) 282-3800
www.lutron.com
- Wayne-Dalton
(800) 827-3667
www.wayne-dalton.com



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