

Holiday Efficiency Tips

Q: How can I save energy at home during the holidays?

turning the heat down in areas you are not using.

A: The holidays can be a magical time when we come together with our loved ones to share food, gifts and quality time.

It is also the most expensive time of year for many of us. Along with the expense of gifts, meals and travel comes colder weather and darker nights that lead to more electricity use and higher bills.

One way to reduce the financial burden of the most wonderful time of year is by implementing efficiency tips to use less energy and lower your monthly bills.

Home Practices

If you are hosting guests, your household will consume more electricity than normal. Be prepared with efficiency basics:

- ✦ Program your thermostat to 68 degrees when you are home and dial it back 8 to 10 degrees when you leave the house or go to sleep.
- ✦ Run the clothes washer on cold with full loads.
- ✦ When not in use, turn off lights and the TV. Fully shut down computers and gaming systems instead of putting them in sleep or standby mode.
- ✦ Lower the thermostat when guests are over or cooking food. Most gatherings happen in the center of the home, so save energy by

Cooking Efficiency

Whether you are making holiday treats or a feast, you can lower energy use in the kitchen.

Turn on the oven light to check food. Every time the oven door is opened, the temperature inside drops by up to 25 degrees, according to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Make use of a slow cooker, microwave, toaster oven or warming plate, which use less energy than an oven and stovetop. According to DOE, a toaster oven can use up to half the energy of the average electric stove over the same cooking time.

Let hot food cool to room temperature before placing it inside the refrigerator. This ensures you don't increase the temperature inside your fridge and cause it to use more energy to cool down.

You can also take some of the stress and expense out of your holiday cooking by asking guests to bring a dish.

Holiday Lighting

This year, switch to LEDs for all your holiday lighting. According to DOE, LED holiday lights consume 70% less energy than conventional incandescent light strands. It costs 27 cents to light a 6-foot tree for 12 hours a day for 40



LED holiday lights consume 70% less energy than conventional incandescent light strands. Consider updating your decorations this holiday season. PHOTO BY MARK GILLILAND/PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

days with LEDs compared to \$10 for incandescent lights.

Pick up a few light timers so you don't have to remember to unplug your lights every evening. You can also choose to upgrade to smart holiday lights that offer a wide range of app-controlled options, including time, colors, music and modes.

Out-of-Town Efficiency

If visiting family and friends during the holidays, prepare your house to use less energy while you are away.

Water heating is the second-largest energy expense in your home, accounting for about 18% of your utility bill, according to DOE.

Switching your water heater to vacation mode will reduce wasted energy by keeping the water at a lower temperature. If your water heater does not have vacation mode on the dial, adjust it to the lowest setting.

Set your home's thermostat to around 55 degrees.

Instead of leaving on lights all day, consider upgrading a lamp or fixture to a smart lightbulb. This allows you to control lights from afar and set a schedule for the light to turn on and off.

Another option is to repurpose your holiday light timer for one of your living room lamps.

Ask Your Electric Utility

To mitigate the costs of the holidays for years to come, contact your electric utility and ask about special programs, such as budget billing, which lets you divide your annual energy costs into fixed monthly payments.

Your utility also may have energy-efficiency rebates for home appliances and lightbulbs.

Taking these actions can lead to happy holidays for years to come. ■



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