



Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

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EASY WAYS TO SAVE ENERGY & MONEY

With Ohioans averaging nearly \$2,200 of their yearly budgets on electricity and natural gas costs, looking for ways to reduce those energy bills is a worthwhile investment. There are many areas of the home that can be improved to cut down on heating, cooling, lighting, cooking and running other appliances where 75 percent of utility dollars are spent. In fact, one family of four can spend nearly \$33 per month on hot showers alone.

By incorporating a few simple changes, a typical household can reduce its energy and water usage and save up to 20 percent on their natural gas, electric and water bills a year. Here are some examples of ways to save.

\$100+ per year

Programmable thermostat

A properly set programmable thermostat can save homeowners \$100 to \$180 per year if they maintain those settings. Programmable thermostats store four or more settings per day and will adjust the temperature automatically based on a pre-established schedule. Customers with heat pumps should install an appropriate programmable thermostat.

\$75 per year

Water heater blanket

Wrap older water heaters with an insulation blanket. A blanket is inexpensive and can save between 10 and 40 percent on water heating costs. Do not wrap a water heater less than five years old because it has sufficient insulation and wrapping it may cause the tank to overheat.

\$70 per year

CFL light bulb

Switching your five most frequently used incandescent light bulbs to compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs) can deliver significant savings. CFLs use 75 percent less energy and last up to 10 times longer.

\$56 per year

Kilowatt meter

Appliances account for up to two-thirds of electricity used in the home. Find out which appliances consume the most energy by using a kilowatt meter.

\$50+ per year

Low-flow Showerhead

Showers account for about 22 percent of water use in a home. Showerheads are measured by flow—the number of gallons they deliver per minute (gpm).

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The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel (OCC), the residential utility consumer advocate, represents the interests of 4.5 million households in proceedings before state and federal regulators and in the courts.

The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

For more information, please visit the OCC website at www.pickocc.org.



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The greater the pressure pushing water through pipes and showerheads, the greater the volume of water forced out. A few years ago, showerheads delivered about 5 to 8 gpm at a water pressure of 80 pounds per square inch. The current standard for low-flow heads is 2.5 gpm (some showerheads deliver only 1.6 gpm), but they don't lower shower head pressure.

\$30 per year

Aerators

Bathrooms account for more than 60 percent of average household indoor water use. Using aerators and low-flow showerheads, and fixing leaking faucets and toilets will save money. A leaking faucet dripping one water drop per second can waste about 3,000 gallons per year.

\$24 per year

Sealers

Up to 30 percent of your heating and cooling energy may be lost through holes and gaps in the exterior of your home. Check for air leaking through electrical outlets, switch plates, window frames, baseboards, weather stripping around doors, fireplace dampers, attic hatches and window-mounted air conditioners. Using incense or a ribbon can be among the easiest ways to help detect leaks in these areas. Plug all holes to keep air from leaking out or in.

\$18 per year

Toilet Tank Bag

The average household flushes the toilet 15 times a day. Using a toilet tank bag displaces up to 0.8 gallons per flush for a savings of 4,380 gallons per year. A leaky toilet can waste 200 gallons per day. New WaterSense-rated toilets are 20 percent more efficient than federal standards that currently require toilets to use no more than 1.6 gallons per flush.

Sources:

www.ecohatchery.com; www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=products.es_at_home_tips; www.epa.gov/WaterSense/pubs/simple_steps.html; www.hes.lbl.gov/consumer/faqs; and www.energysavers.gov

\$17 per year

Window and door insulation

The average home wastes from 25 to 40 percent of its energy because of poor window insulation. Consumers with older windows can use insulation kits in the winter to help create temporary storm windows. Also, use curtains, drapes, blinds and shades to better regulate home temperatures throughout the year. In the winter, draperies can be used to help reduce chills around windows. In the summer, they can be used to block light and heat in the middle of the day. Applying low-emission window film to south-facing windows helps reduce heat from entering the home. Installing storm windows to existing pane windows may be a cheaper, yet effective, option to replacing windows.

\$16 per year

Refrigerators

Refrigerators account for about 14 percent of an average home's electricity bills. Keep your refrigerator or freezer away from direct sunlight or warm air (range, dishwasher, heating ducts, etc.) so that the appliance doesn't have to use more energy to remain cold. Use a brush to clean the refrigerator's coils so the appliance doesn't have to work as hard. Use a thermometer to monitor its temperature. Replace old kitchen appliances with newer Energy Star-rated models. Energy efficient dishwashers can save \$40 per year in utility costs and Energy Star refrigerators use 20 percent less energy.

\$5 per year

Pipe insulation

Insulate water pipes to reduce heat loss. Foam pipe sleeves can help raise water temperature 2 to 4 degrees allowing for a lower water heater temperature. With insulated pipes, you will not have to wait as long for warm water to reach a faucet or showerhead.