

Power Smart Energy Conservation Library

Energy Efficiency at Home

Three reasons to save energy at home

There are many good reasons to save energy around your home, but here are three of the best:

- to save money on your household energy bills
- to reduce the amount of energy going to waste around your home, and
- to lighten your impact on the environment.

Fortunately, it's not hard to make a real difference - both to your energy bills and to our planet. A good place to start is by understanding exactly where the energy goes in your home - for most of us, that's heating (including water heating), lighting and appliances - and then targeting those areas where simple changes, many no- or low-cost, will have the most impact.

To find out more, click bchydro.com/powersmart or call 1 877 431 9463.

Top 10 tips for saving energy at home

BC Hydro has drawn up a Top 10 list of tips to help you and your family to both conserve energy and reduce your impact on the environment:

1. **Schedule** an energy audit and follow through with improvements.
2. **Draftproof** your home by eliminating those little gaps, cracks and holes that let cold air into your home.
3. **Turn off** all unnecessary lights.
4. **Replace** your old incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescents.
5. **Install** automatic lighting controls, such as dimmers, timers and motion sensors.
6. **Buy green** electronics and appliances with the ENERGY STAR® label.
7. **Unplug** that unused fridge or freezer.
8. **Wash** your clothes in cold water.
9. **Hang** your clothes to dry whenever possible.
10. **Unplug** your electronic devices when not in use, including your cell phone charger.

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Save on heating your home

No matter how you heat your home - with electricity, natural gas or another fuel - there are a number of things you can do to reduce how much energy you use to keep warm. For example:

- Heating costs rise about five per cent for every degree above 20°C (68°F) that you set your thermostat. Lower your thermostat by one or two degrees and wear a sweater if you need to.
- If you can, turn the heat down in rooms you don't use very often and shut the door.
- Switch to programmable, ENERGY STAR® thermostats, for the whole home if possible or at least for the main rooms. A programmable thermostat works automatically: you set it once - for example, to turn down to 16°C at night and back up to 21°C in the morning - and it will continue to automatically adjust the room temperature for you. The result: you could save as much as 10 per cent on your energy bills.
- Replace old or drafty windows and doors with ENERGY STAR® windows and doors. These will allow less heat out during the winter (or in during the summer) and net you year-round savings of as much as seven per cent on your energy bills - even more if you live in one of the colder areas of British Columbia. They'll also decrease outside noise and protect your belongings from sun damage. If you can't replace them, use weatherstripping or caulking to help make them draftproof.

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Stay out of hot water at home

If you've got an electric hot water tank at home, by the time hot water makes it from your tank to your showerhead or tap, it's probably already lost about 15 per cent of its heat. You can help reduce that heat loss by:

- wrapping the tank in an insulation blanket, available from your local hardware store, and
- wrapping the first metre (three feet) of both the hot and cold water pipes extending from your tank.

And of course, consider using less hot water when you can by:

- installing low-flow showerheads
- taking shorter showers (a five-minute shower uses about half as much water as a bath), and
- washing your clothes in cold water.

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Adjust your home lighting

There's more to cutting down on how much energy you use to light your home than just flicking off a switch when you leave a room - although that's a great start. To make a real difference, you should also:

- Change to compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). CFLs use up to 75 per cent less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs while producing the same amount and quality of light, and they last up to 10 times longer. Choosing "soft white" or "warm white" CFLs will give you a warm, cozy looking glow in your living spaces. "Pure white" and "daylight" CFLs are great for bright, energetic workspaces.
- Put dimmers on your light switches so you can adjust light levels to suit what you are doing at the time - watching TV does not require as much light as reading a book, for example. Just make sure to match the dimmer to the light bulb: any incandescent bulb can be dimmed (this will also extend how long it lasts), but you'll need to buy specially marked dimmable CFLs.
- Install motion sensors that will automatically turn lights on or off when someone enters or leaves a room. Motion sensors are also great for outdoor security. (Again, you'll need to buy dimmable CFLs.)
- Light up your Christmas with energy-efficient LEDs. These light strings use up to 95 per cent less electricity than standard incandescent strings, last at least 10 times longer, are virtually unbreakable, and produce very little heat - reducing fire risk.

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Tame your hungry home appliances

Did you know that your refrigerator probably uses more energy than any other appliance in your home?

If you're planning to replace your old refrigerator - or your freezer, clothes washer or dishwasher - look for models that have earned the ENERGY STAR® label. These are the most energy-efficient appliances on the market today, offering top performance and major energy and water savings - all in one neat package. In fact, ENERGY STAR refrigerators require about half the energy of models manufactured before 1993, and they are at least 15 per cent more efficient than fridges built to meet today's minimum standards.

But if you're not yet ready to replace your appliances yet, don't despair! There are many other ways you can save on energy. For example:

- Open the door to your fridge only when you have to. Opening it just to see what's inside (sound familiar?) wastes both cold air and energy. Also set your fridge and freezer to their most energy-efficient settings - just cold enough, but not too cold. For fridges, that's 2 - 3°C (35 - 37°F); for freezers, it's minus 18°C (0°F).
- Resist the urge to smell your brownies baking: every time you open your oven door, you lose about 20 per cent of the oven's heat. Look through the oven window instead.

- Run your dishwasher with a full load only - why wash empty space? And skip the heat-dry setting and let your dishes air dry, or use the economy or energy-saver setting.
- Wash your clothes in cold water. About 90 per cent of the energy your washer consumes goes to heating water. If you wash with cold water, you'll save that energy, and your clothes will come out just as clean.
- Match the appliance to the job. Small jobs call for small appliances. Toaster ovens and microwaves use less energy than your large oven; electric kettles use less energy than stovetop kettles.

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Deal with your devices

As long as they are plugged in, all electronic devices - such as computers, printers, modems, televisions, cell phone chargers, coffee makers, DVD players, stereos and anything else with a clock, timer, adapter, memory or remote control - continue to draw power even when you're not using them. If you've got a lot of devices (the average North American home has a whopping 25 or more!), that can add up to a big drain on your wallet.

To reduce your phantom load:

- Simply unplug your devices when you're not using them, or turn off the power bar/surge protector. (The only exceptions are cable TV converters for pay-TV and personal video recorders: these are better left plugged directly into the wall to preserve their settings.)
- Enable the "sleep" or "power save" mode on your computer. This way, your computer will automatically save energy, even if you forget to turn it off when you're not working at it or away from your desk.
- If you're in the market for a new TV or other electronic device, look for one with the ENERGY STAR® label. It will use up to 50 per cent less energy while providing the same performance as a less-efficient model.

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Join Team Power Smart today!

BC Hydro's Team Power Smart is a call to action for all British Columbians to join together to use electricity more efficiently and conserve energy wherever possible - because the best way to meet our province's growing electricity needs is to use energy more wisely.

All you have to do to join is commit to reducing your home energy consumption by 10 per cent. And that's as easy as flicking a switch, turning a tap, pressing a button or pulling a plug. In return, you will:

- be able to track your electricity savings online and see whether a new energy-saving measure is really working

- receive our monthly newsletter with all-new Power Smart stories, tips and ideas, and
- be automatically entered to win great rewards and prizes.

Join today at bchydro.com/powersmart.