

Greening the Holidays



As temperatures plummet during the winter months, many families struggle to keep up with increased energy costs. To combat these costs, practicing energy efficiency and conservation is the fastest, simplest, and cheapest way to cut costs and make sure your family keeps warm this winter. And it's good for the environment. Outlined below are energy-saving tips to help you keep utility costs down and to keep your family warm this holiday season and in the months ahead.

Holiday tips and gift picks

Electronics often find their way to the top of the holiday wish list. Look for the ENERGY STAR label to give your loved ones the latest and greatest in energy efficient technology and features! Need gift ideas? Check out the ENERGY STAR Product Finder: <http://www.energystar.gov/productfinder/>

Make holidays bright with LED lights

Use LED lights this holiday season to decrease the cost of your decorated home. Also, plug them in when hosting guests or during times when your family is home. Better yet, use a plug timer. ENERGY STAR holiday lights use 50% less electricity than conventional incandescent light strings.

Recycle old electronics

If you bought a family member that new game console, phone, or High-Definition DVD, make sure to reuse or recycle the old device. For more information on how to safely recycle electronics, including cellphones, computers, and TVs, visit www.epa.gov/epawaste.

Unplug when not in use

Unplug electronic devices once they are charged, and turn them off when they are not in use. Plugging electronics into a power strip makes this easy. More advanced power strips even let you designate "always on" status for products that need to maintain network connection (like your modem/router or pay TV set-top box), while powering off other products that only need power you need intermittently.

Conduct an energy audit

Find the nooks and crannies that may be releasing warm air from your home. Air leaks around windows, doors, and water pipes may cause a great amount of energy loss in your home. Add caulk or weather stripping to seal leaks around windows and doors, and make sure water pipes, attics and crawl spaces are adequately insulated. See KyHomePerformance.org to find an energy evaluator to get recommendations to help you home perform better and cheaper.

Pull out the sweaters

Bundle up in cozy sweaters and layer clothing rather than turning up the thermostat. Leaving your thermostat on 68 degrees during winter months can help lower your energy costs by 10 percent. At the very least, use a programmable thermostat to set the temperature back at night or when you are away.

Use the sun

During the day, pull back the drapes of south-facing windows to allow the sun to warm your home. Close them in the evenings to reduce drafts.

Adjust water heater settings

Water heaters use nearly 25 percent of the energy consumed in homes. You can reduce this cost by turning your water heater down to a medium setting, which can also help prevent scalded hands!

Maintain heating systems

It's important to schedule a regular check-up for your heating systems. Change or clean your air filter, and have your heating systems serviced regularly to make sure its functioning up to par.

Check the fireplace

Heat may be lost through fireplaces that are not in use. Make sure to keep the damper closed when the fireplace is not in use and close off non-functioning fireplaces with insulation to prevent energy loss. An open fireplace is like an open window in your home.



The Kentucky Department for Energy Development and Independence (DEDI) is an ENERGY STAR partner. For more information on DEDI, go to www.energy.ky.gov.

