

## NEED HELP WITH YOUR ENERGY BILLS?

1. Call our offices about information on how to apply for an energy assistance grant.
2. If you need help with understanding or filling out the energy assistance application, call your county office.
3. If your energy bill is past due, call your utility company to see if a payment agreement can be made.
4. If you do not qualify for a LIHEAP grant, but need heat assistance, contact your county office for information about other resources.

## AIR LEAKS

Warm air leaking into your home during the summer and out of your home during the winter can waste a lot of your energy dollars. One of the quickest dollar-saving tasks you can do is caulk, seal and weather strip all seams, cracks, and openings to the outside. You can save 10% or more on your energy bill by reducing the air leaks in your home.

### Test your home

First, test your home for air tightness. On a windy day, hold an incense stick next to your windows, doors, electrical boxes, plumbing fixtures, attic hatches and other locations where air might be entering your home. If the smoke stream travels horizontally, you have located the air leak.

### Seal Any Leaks

Use weather stripping, caulk or insulation to reduce the air blowing through the leak as much as possible. Rolled up towels can be used to block drafts flowing under doorways. Also, close and seal heat registers that attempt to heat a cold, un-insulated garage, porch, or attic storage.

## No-Cost Tips

### Tips for both seasons:

- Lower the temperature on your water heater to 115-120 degrees. Also, to keep heated water warm, wrap your water heater in a water heater blanket. This can reduce up to 10% on water heating costs.
- Keep your fireplace damper closed, unless a fire is burning, to prevent up to 8% of your warm or cool air from going up the chimney.
- Lower your thermostat temperature to the lowest temperature that is comfortable to your family. You may save as much as 5% on your energy bill for each degree you lower your thermostat. Also, reduce your thermostat setting at night and/or when you are away. A 10-degree setback for 8 hours each day could save up to 9% on your bill.
- Clear away weeds and debris from outdoor air conditioning and heat pump units.
- Make sure that warm air registers, baseboard heaters and radiators are not blocked by furniture, carpeting, or draperies. If air cannot circulate freely through your heating or cooling units, you will have higher bills and more service calls.
- Keep windows and doors located near your thermostat closed tightly. Also, keep heat sources, such as lamps, away from it. Temperature fluctuations near your thermostat can affect the amount of time your furnace or cooling system will remain running.
- Eliminate wasted energy. Turn off lights in unoccupied rooms. Unplug unnecessary appliances. Only run your washer, dryer and dishwasher with a full load.
- Use kitchen, bath and other ventilation fans wisely; in just one hour, these fans can pull out a houseful of warmed or cooled air. Turn fans off as soon as they have done the job.

- Vacuum your refrigerator's condenser coils at least once a year.
- Keep your refrigerator temperature at 37 to 49 degrees, and your freezer at 0 degrees.

### Tips for Winter only:

- Proper humidity levels reduce the energy use of your heating system because you will feel warmer at a lower thermostat setting. Run a humidifier or boil water on the stove to add humidity and feel warmer.
- Wear heavier clothing and use blankets indoors during the winter. Layering clothing helps trap heat near your body so the house does not need to be as warm. Also, avoid staying in one position for too long. Exercise and activity generate body heat, which makes you feel warmer.
- Wash laundry in cold water whenever possible. This can save between 20 and 40 cents per load.
- Run your ceiling fan in reverse during the winter. Most fans come with a switch to reverse the way the blade spins. Running your fan in reverse when it is cold pushes warm air near the ceiling (remember, heat rises) down to where you are.
- Keep draperies and shades open on sunny days to let in the heat. Close them on cloudy, cold or windy days to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows. Open draperies and shades on your south facing windows during the winter days to allow the warmth of the sunlight to enter your home.

### Tips for Summer only:

- Keep your thermostat at 78 degrees or higher in the summer.
- Line dry your laundry to keep from using energy from the dryer and increasing the temperature in the home during the cooling season.

## Low-Cost Tips

- Install water saving showerheads and faucet aerators.
- Weather-strip your windows and doors. Replace old weather-stripping that has become dry and cracked. Rope caulking is easily installed by unrolling it and pressing it into window gaps. It is sold in most hardware stores for around \$5 for 90 feet. This type of caulking is good for renters because it can be easily removed later.
- Check your air-conditioning and furnace filters at least once per month and replace them when they appear dirty. This allows them to run more efficiently and at less cost.
- Put VCR's, stereos, computers and other small appliances on power surge-protector strips and turn them off when not in use. Standby power on electronics can consume a considerable amount of energy.
- Any hot water you can save not only reduces your heating bill for heating the water, but reduces your water bill as well. Install low-flow showerheads, which can reduce the amount of water you use by up to 3 gallons per minute. Also, fix any leaky faucets. A small drip can waste a bathtub full of hot water each month.
- Repair all holes in ceiling, walls and floor and make them airtight.
- Install compact fluorescent bulbs in place of existing incandescent bulbs.
- Look for energy efficient appliances with the Energy Star label when you have to replace an appliance.
- Install outlet and switch insulators in all locations possible.

# Energy Bills Too High?

## The Cold Weather Rule

The Missouri Public Service Commission's Cold Weather Rule prohibits disconnection of residential service during the time-period from November 1 to March 31 when the temperature is forecasted to drop below 32 degrees for the following 24-hour period provided:

1. The customer contacts the utility if unable to pay in full.
2. The customer contacts the utility as soon as possible if service has been disconnected to determine if he/she is eligible for a Cold Weather Rule payment plan.
3. The customer applies for Energy Assistance from any public assistance heating program (federal, state or local) for which he/she is eligible.
4. The customer makes an initial payment (or the utility receives a pledge if the customer is eligible for energy assistance) and the customer enters into and maintains a payment agreement for arrears.
  - A 12-month payment agreement is available for arrears.
5. If the customer defaults on a payment agreement under the Cold Weather Rule, the customer must pay 80% of the amount owed.
5. Registered Low-Income, Elderly, or disabled customers may pay a minimum of 50% of the established Cold Weather Rule payment plan amount or 50% of the actual bill for usage in that billing period.

## The Hot Weather Rule

The Missouri Hot Weather Rule shall mean the period of time from June 1 to September 30, in which the discontinuance of gas and electric service to all residential users, where gas or electricity is used as the cooling source, is prohibited if:

1. The National Weather Service local forecast, for the following 24 hours predicts that temperatures rise above 95 degrees Fahrenheit or that the heat index shall rise above 105 degrees Fahrenheit;

## Assistance Programs

**Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** is a federally funded program, which assists low-income households in meeting their energy needs. LIHEAP has two components: Energy Assistance (EA) and Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP).

1) Energy Assistance (EA) can assist a household once each winter with their primary heating source. The customer's heating bill does not have to be in arrears. Benefits are based on the number of people in the household, household income, and the type of fuel used to heat the home. Payment is made to the primary heating vendor. The program starts October 1 for elderly or disabled households and November 1 for all other households. The last day to apply for a grant is March 31 of each year unless funds are depleted before that date.

2) Energy Crisis Intervention Program (ECIP) provides financial assistance to households in a verifiable energy crisis, i.e., terminated service, shut-off notice, low propane, pre-paid electric customer that is about to run out. ECIP funds can be used for primary or secondary fuel sources. Winter ECIP is available starting Oct 1 for elderly or disabled households and Nov 1 for all other households and ends May 31 or when funds are depleted. Summer ECIP is available starting June 1 and ends on Sept. 30 or when funds are depleted.

**ESC'S Weatherization Division** provides energy efficient home improvements to low-income households in Barton, Newton, McDonald, and Jasper Counties. Priority is given to the elderly and those with physical disabilities. Applications are available at all Economic Security Corporation offices.

**Contact your local office** to see when their next Energy Conservation Class is. They usually have DIY Weatherization items to give away at the end of class. Some of those items are: **Home Sealing Starter Kits, Outlet Insulators, Compact Fluorescent Bulbs, Caulk, Weather Stripping, and Low-flow Showerheads.**



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