

Eight Ways to Rein in Your Holiday Energy Bills

Each January we begin the new year with a bigger than average pile of post-holiday bills to pay. To make sure holiday energy costs don't add to that daunting stack you face, pick two or more of these easy, energy-wise tips to help make you and your holidays a bit richer.

- If you are replacing or adding strings of lights this holiday season, save up to 99% of the electricity to run them by buying LED (Light Emitting Diode) strings. LED lights can be purchased at LL Greens and Chateau Drug.
- Make sure to consider the energy used by your new holiday decorations BEFORE you buy them. A string of 'icicle' lights have more lights per linear foot because they have lights going vertically and horizontally. Many beautiful decorations can be enjoyed all day long and never need electricity. Buy accordingly.
- Put your lights on outdoor timers so they only turn on in the evening and set them to turn off automatically when you go to bed. Operate the lights for no more than 6 hours a day. Leaving lights on night and day will use four times the energy and create four times the pollution as just the evening hours. (Several types of timers are available at local hardware stores and Kings.)
- While enjoying a cozy fireside evening, turn your thermostat down to 50 or 55 degrees so that furnace-heated air is not flying up your chimney with the smoke. Also make sure that the fireplace flue and doors are closed when the fire is not in use.
- Remember to think about the energy required to run your gifts during their lifetime and consider buying more gifts that are not battery or outlet powered. Always look for Energy Star electronics when buying that new computer, new lights, a new refrigerator, etc.
- Unplug the video games and your TV and read some favorite holiday stories, enjoy holiday games and puzzles or some good conversations over hot chocolate. Give the gift of time to your family while saving energy and money.
- Make a New Year's resolution to seal up air leaks and install adequate insulation to increase the comfort of your indoor space and reduce home heating costs and air pollution by up to 20%. The new year is a great time to reassess your power consumption, recommit to energy efficiency practices and rejoice in the savings.
- Turn lights off after the holiday season and only light them up for special occasions during the remaining winter months.