

## **Simple Ways To Conserve Energy In Your Home**

*By J. Lennox Scott*

With the increased emphasis on global warming in recent years, combined with rising energy costs, more and more people are asking what they can do to make their homes more energy efficient. Energy conservation can be as simple as closing your curtains at night, changing a light bulb, turning down your thermostat, or closing the fireplace damper. Many of the most inexpensive solutions quickly pay for themselves in conservation, which you ultimately benefit from when you get your power bill.

One of the biggest ways you can conserve energy is to take advantage of “off-peak” hours. This is a step that everyone can take because it simply involves shifting your power use of major appliances, such as washing machines, dryers, and dishwashers. Puget Sound Energy recommends using these appliances outside of peak hours—peak hours are between 6am-10am and 5pm-9pm. Studies show that by shifting a portion of your energy use, consumers can significantly lower wholesale electricity prices, which saves everyone money in the long run.

Another way you can save energy is by washing your clothes in cold water and only running full loads. When using the dryer, toss in a couple of dry towels with your clothes to help speed up the drying process. It’s also important to clean the lint trap in your dryer after every load and make sure the dryer hose and vent are clear.

There are several steps you can follow to reduce your home’s demand on heating during the winter months. Conventional measures, such as setting back your thermostat, are effective at reducing energy consumption. It is recommended that you keep your thermostat set between 65 and 72 degrees during the winter months. Keep in mind that by simply lowering your thermostat one degree, your furnace will use seven percent less energy overall. It’s also important to clean your furnace filter frequently—doing so will enable your heating system to run more efficiently and cost-effectively.

It’s estimated that lighting accounts for 10 percent of your overall home energy bill, so another way you can conserve is by using energy-saving fluorescent light bulbs, known as CFL light bulbs. CFLs use approximately one-quarter of the energy of equivalent incandescent bulbs, they give off warm, indirect light, and they last ten times longer than average light bulbs. When shopping for CFLs, look for those with the Energy Star label on them—this ensures that you’re purchasing a product that has been approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE).

For more information about energy conservation, please visit [www.energystar.org](http://www.energystar.org).

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