

HOW TO PAY LESS FOR ENERGY THIS WINTER



By Tarana Rana

As the temperature outside drops in the winter months, it is not uncommon for most households to experience a significant rise in their energy bills. According to a BC Hydro spokesperson Simi Heer, the average energy bill for a household can increase by up to 66 per cent in the winter season compared to other months.

So what causes this drastic hike in our energy bill? One obvious reason is the colder weather. "People use more electricity during the

winter [for] home heating," says Heer. "For an electrically heated home, heating can account for up to 50 per cent of your electricity bill."

Besides being colder, winter days are shorter as well and the reduced daylight hours means household lights are on for longer periods of time, increasing your energy consumption. So what can you do to reduce those astronomical bills? BC Hydro offers five simple steps to help cut back on those bills, while still ensuring your house remains bright and toasty all winter long.

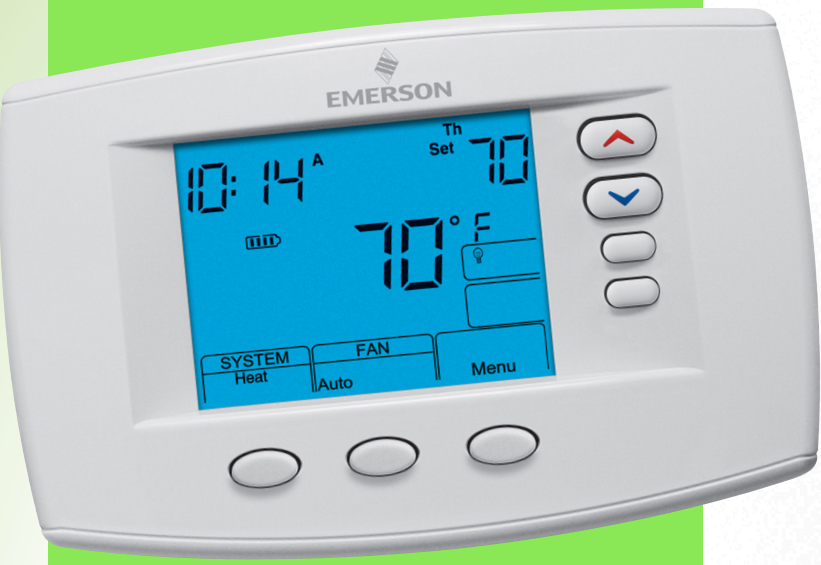


Draft-Proof & Insulate

Gaps around your windows and doors allow heat to escape and cold air to rush in, which often contributes to a higher energy bill. "A simple, low-cost way to save energy is through draft-proofing," says Heer. "You can use caulking and weather-stripping to seal these leaks. It's a low cost way to reduce heat loss." All the necessary supplies

for draft proofing your home are easily available at any local Home Depot store. Draft-proofing is most efficient around windows, door frames, around the chimney and unused openings in the walls or roof.

It also helps to add or upgrade your home's insulation. If your insulation is unable to keep the heat in, it leads to wasting energy. According to BC Hydro, areas that lose the most heat are attics, basements, and crawlspaces.



Manage Your Heating

As Heer stated previously, heating accounts for about 50 per cent of your home's energy bill. Using a programmable thermostat helps you better manage your heat and reduce energy waste. "It allows you to heat your home only when you need to," says Heer. "You can set the thermostat to ensure the heat automatically turns down when no one is home and when everyone is sleeping." BC Hydro suggests that the ideal temperature for when you're asleep or is 16 °C. Reducing the heat by even 2 degrees can help cut your costs by 5 percent.



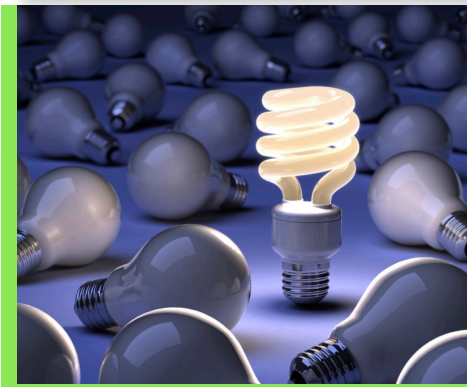
Simple energy-saving tips everyone should know!

- ➔ Unplug all electronic devices that are not in use.
- ➔ Run your dishwasher with a full load only.
- ➔ Open the fridge door only when you need to.
- ➔ Self-clean your oven while it's still hot.
- ➔ Wash all your clothes in cold water and try to wash large loads at a time.
- ➔ Look for the 'Energy Smart' label when buying new appliances. by 5 percent.



Shade Your Windows

Something as simple as using blinds or drapes in the winter months can help cut down your heating costs noticeably. According to BC Hydro, the heat loss from windows contributes for up to 10 to 25 percent of your energy bills. This doesn't mean all your blinds should remain fastened shut all winter long – be sure to open blinds each day for a while to allow for air circulation. Also, south-facing windows which receive direct sunlight should remain open during the day as sunlight is a great natural way to warm your home.



Use Efficient Lighting

More time spent indoors and short, dark winter days mean increased electricity usage as more household lights are turned on for longer periods of time. Switching to energy-efficient lighting is a good way to cut back your costs. Compact fluorescent light bulbs or CFLs not only last 10 times longer than incandescent bulbs but also use 75 per cent less energy.



Track Your Usage

Being aware of your energy usage is a good way to identify the areas in which you can save next time. BC Hydro offers a number of energy tracking tools on your online account. You can track your energy consumption and see how it changes over time. The online account also offers alerts and reminders to help cut down your bills.

Following these 5 simple steps will help you significantly cut down on high winter energy bills and make your household more energy-efficient. For more energy-saving tips and tools, visit BC Hydro's website at bchydro.com