

Know your options for energy efficiency

By Tim Velder, PRECorp Marketing Communications

Extreme cold weather makes a big impact on electric usage, accounting for up to half of your bill.

Many newly constructed buildings and homes have new high-efficiency insulation, heating systems, appliances, and window seals. But many of us live in homes that have had some years of experience. These homes require additional help to keep Old Man Winter on the outside.

Many of these efficiency measures cost little money to accomplish and can be done by the most amateur do-it-yourselfer.

The following suggestions can reduce your power usage just by managing areas where cold air and warm air connect.

- Wrap exposed pipes and water heaters that are in unconditioned spaces.
- Make sure to change your air filter once a month.
- Keep drapes closed at night and keep those that don't get direct sunlight closed during the day, too.
- Keep the fireplace damper closed when it is not in use. Keeping it open can bring cold air into the room.
- Caulk around the fireplace hearth, and caulk or weather strip around doors and windows.
- Log on to your PRECorp SmartHub account to

Continued on the back...

Events calendar

The PRECorp Board of Directors meets the third Tuesday of the month at 9:30 a.m. at rotating locations in Sundance, Gillette, and Sheridan. Meetings might be moved to avoid conflicts with state or national cooperative events. The tentative dates for 2017 are as follows:

- January 17 - Sundance**
- February 21 - Gillette**
- March 21 - Sheridan**
- April 18 - Sundance**
- May 16 - Gillette**
- June 20 - Sheridan**
- July 18 - Sundance**
- August 15 - Gillette**
- September 19 - Sheridan**
- October 17 - Sundance**
- November 21 - Gillette**
- December 19 - Sheridan**

Other events to remember:

- **Tuesday, January 31** - Application deadline for Basin Scholarship; Youth Leadership Camp
- **Wednesday, March 1** - All Employee Meeting, PRECorp Offices closed
- **Friday, March 31**: Application deadline for *PRECorp Scholarship* and *Swanda Scholarship*. Swanda Scholarship applicants must be Crook County high school seniors entering ag-related studies in post-secondary schools.

Efficiency options...

From front page.

keep up with your use. If we've had a few days of frigid temperatures, see how you can try to save on days that are milder.

- Dress for the weather, even if you are inside. Wearing proper clothing like long sleeves and pants, or wrapping up in a cozy blanket will help combat the temptation of bumping up the thermostat.
- If the house feels cold when you wake up or arrive home because you turned down the thermostat, do not crank it to 80 degrees. It will not heat the room faster. Set it back to 68 degrees and let it go to work.
- Eliminate "vampire energy" waste. When you are not using an appliance or an electronic device, unplug it to save energy. Power strips are definitely a good investment for your home.
- Utilize small appliances. During the winter, the main appliances used are the oven and stovetop. Try using your slow cooker, microwave, toaster oven or warming plate more often. This will result in substantial energy savings.
- Be kind to your oven. Every time you open the oven door to check on that dish, the temperature inside is

reduced by as much as 25 degrees. This forces the oven to use more energy in order to get back to the proper cooking temperature. Try keeping the door closed as much as possible. Also, remember to take advantage of residual heat for the last five to 10 minutes of baking time – this is another way to save energy use.

- If you're using a ceramic or glass dish, you can typically set your oven 25 degrees lower than stated, since these items hold more heat than metal pans.
- Give your burners some relief. The metal reflectors under your stovetop burners should always be clean. If not, this will prevent your stove from working as effectively as it should.

Using the tips above can certainly help you manage your

energy use, but your bill may still be higher than normal in winter months. Why?

Even those with the most efficient HVAC systems will see more use in extreme weather.

When extreme cold temperatures hit, our heaters work overtime.

For example, even if you set your thermostat to our recommended 68 degrees in the winter, when it is 19 degrees outside, your system has to work hard to make up that 49-degree difference.

Your heater works harder and cycles on and off more often, making your use much higher. That means your bill will be much higher.

Remember, there is value in comfort. For us to be comfortable in our homes, our heaters are going to work harder, but it may be worth the additional cost to you.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month



According to the Consumer Electronics Association, the average household owns 24 consumer electronics products, which are responsible for 12 percent of household electricity use. ENERGY STAR-certified audio/video equipment is up to 50 percent more efficient than conventional models.

Source: EnergyStar.gov