



Energy Efficiency: Helping you take a bite out of your electric bill



Kelly Hamm
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When I go to the grocery store, I carry a list with me. Otherwise, I'm bound to forget something.

The same goes for the hardware store when I want to undertake some projects around the house. What materials do I need? And if the work involves weatherization, will it really help me save money on my electric bill?

Generally, the answer to that last question is a resounding "yes." Even small energy efficiency measures will save money. For as little as \$2, the cost of an outlet and switch plate insulator kit, you can begin to drastically improve comfort around your residence. **7233C4A-102B**

What areas should you focus on? Start with the basics: applying weather stripping and caulk around doors and windows, replacing traditional incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent light bulbs

(CFLs) and insulating your water heater. Then look at some bigger expenditures: adding insulation to your attic, installing a programmable thermostat, and sealing ductwork. You can find even more ways to save on the U.S. Department of Energy's EnergySavers.gov or visit togetherwesave.com to find out how little changes around the house add up to big savings.

We at McDonough Power are committed to doing everything possible to keep your electric bills affordable. And we're controlling costs through innovation — our energy efficiency programs are just one way we can help you manage your energy use.

For more information about these projects and other energy efficiency programs, visit McDonough Power at www.mcdonoughpower.com or call 309.833.2101. It's just one more way we're looking out for you.



16th Annual Gardener's Day

You can't help but think about it ... spring is just around the corner!! What better way to get ready for spring than attending the 16th Annual Gardener's Day in Macomb. This spring gardening event is hosted by University of Illinois Extension – McDonough County and will be from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, March 19, with registration at 8:30 a.m. It will be held at Western Illinois University

Student Union with all activities on one level.

Twelve gardening topics will be presented. The topics will be divided into four sessions which three topics per session to choose from. Participants can choose to attend one of the three topics offered per session. Topics include: Brambles, Houseplant Propagation, Rain Harvesting ... It is raining dollars and cents!, Shade Gardening with Color, Good Insects, Landscape Solutions, Bulbs of the Midwest, Herbs, Papayas & Diamonds – Impreza & Plentifall, Flower Power, Shrubs, Climbers & Old Garden Roses & Cooking with Herbs.

Vendors from around the area will be on hand showing you what's new for the 2011 gardening season. All registrants are eligible for wonderful door prizes (you must be registered and present to win). The cost of the day is \$35. To receive a lunch your registration must be postmarked by March 15. Late registrations and walk-ins will be \$35 but lunch will not be provided. Classes fill on a first received basis. If you would like more information or for a brochure, contact the McDonough County Extension office at 309-837-3939 or you can download a brochure at <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/mcdonough/downloads/26029.pdf>



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Five ways to spring into energy efficiency

Spring marks a perfect time of year to make your home more energy efficient. Here are five quick tips that will save both energy and money:

1. Seal cracks and gaps around your home.

As you put away your storm windows consider adding weather stripping around leaky doors and caulking around window frames. TogetherWeSave.com, a website sponsored by Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives, the branding program of the nation's not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric co-ops, shows how easy it is to use a caulking gun to seal up leaks around vents, ductwork, and windows. A typical member at McDonough Power can save more than \$200 annually by taking this simple step. **4426DA-1210A**

2. Change filters regularly.

Change furnace and air conditioner filters monthly. Dirty filters restrict air flow and reduce the overall efficiency of your heating and cooling system by making it work harder on hot summer days.

3. Clean the refrigerator inside and out.

Now's a good time to not only throw out that leftover fruitcake from the holidays but check the temperature



settings on your refrigerator. Ideally, a refrigerator's temperature should be between 37 and 40 degrees for maximum operating efficiency.

When it's time to replace that old refrigerator, be sure to buy one that's ENERGY STAR rated. These energy-efficient appliances can save McDonough Power members as much as \$100 a year based on calculations from the TogetherWeSave.com.

4. Think sun block.

TogetherWeSave.com points out that by pulling down the shades on your windows this spring and summer, you could save about \$35 a year. Your local hardware store likely carries lots of inexpensive window coverings. Best of all, by blocking the sun, your house will stay cool and comfortable year-round.

5. Enjoy spring breezes.

Use a clothesline during warmer months and let sunlight and breezes dry clothes naturally. This will reduce your electric bill by not running a dryer and add a genuine clean scent to your family's laundry. **10227D6-328E**

You can learn more about ways to lower your monthly energy bill by visiting TogetherWeSave.com or by calling the energy experts at McDonough Power Cooperative at 309.833.2101.



Tip of the Month

By replacing your five most-used light bulbs with ENERGY STAR-qualified bulbs, you could save \$70 a year.

Source: U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



Energy-saving devices can be too good to be true

By Magen Howard

“If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.” That saying rings especially true when it comes to claims about energy-saving devices, particularly those that indicate they can dramatically cut your heating and cooling costs.

Ads made to look like news stories abound for “Amish style” fireplaces, a “miracle device” that supposedly can slash your heating bills. In actuality, the appliance is simply a space heater hidden inside a false fireplace with a wooden mantle.

If you were to use a space heater eight hours a day, five days a week for a month, it would cost approximately \$15. But whether it can cut your heating bill depends on several factors. **5315A5-260B**

Space heaters only warm a small area. You may save some money if you turn down the thermostat (sometimes to as low as 50 degrees Fahrenheit), sit the space heater in a room with people in it, and then close off that room from the rest of the house. But space heaters cannot come close to replacing energy-efficient central heating or weatherization improvements. So while it’s technically possible to cut your heating bill by 50 percent using space heaters, for most people, it’s impractical.

On the flip side are evaporative coolers that say they will inexpensively cool a room in your home. The inside of the unit consists of cold water and frozen ice packs, like you would use in a lunch box. The water wets a curtain; a fan blows air through the curtain and over the ice packs, theoretically providing a cool breeze. Evaporative coolers operate best in low-humidity regions.

But do they actually work? A Consumer Reports experiment found that even in desert-like conditions, one



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device cooled a test room only 2 degrees over four hours.

“When it comes to saving energy, there are no magic solutions,” asserts Brian Sloboda, Senior Program Manager for energy efficiency at the Cooperative Research Network, the research arm of the National Rural

Electric Cooperative Association. “Anyone promising to slash your utility bill by double digits is stretching the truth to the breaking point. Buying ENERGY STAR-rated appliances, unplugging battery chargers and other ‘vampire’ electronics, and sealing air leaks around windows and doors are some of the best ways to save money and energy.”

The bottom line: There’s no substitute for good old-fashioned energy efficiency measures like weather stripping around doors, caulking around windows, adding insulation to your attic, plugging leaks in ductwork, and regularly cleaning or replacing furnace filters.

Sources: *ConsumerAffairs.com*, *Cooperative Research Network*, *Consumer Reports*
Magen Howard writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation’s 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives. Brian Sloboda contributed to this article.

MAP LOCATION GAME

Every month we will have four map location numbers hidden throughout The Wire. If you find your map location number, call our office and identify your number and the page that it is on. If correct, you will win a \$10 credit on your next electric bill.





YOU'D BE SURPRISED HOW MUCH MONEY A CRAWLSPACE CAN LEAK OUT OF A HOUSE.

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