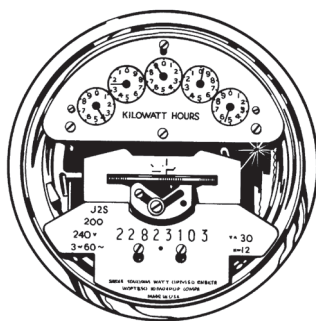


Electric Meters Work While You Are Away



Common Set-and-Forget Appliances

- ▶ Answering machine
- ▶ Aquarium
- ▶ Cable TV box
- ▶ Computer, fax, modem
- ▶ Cordless phone
- ▶ Cordless vacuum
- ▶ Garage door opener
- ▶ Indoor "evening light"
- ▶ Outdoor security light
- ▶ Pool, spa, well pumps
- ▶ Refrigerator, freezer
- ▶ VCR, DVD player
- ▶ Water heater

"We've been on vacation for three weeks. Why didn't we see a reduction in our electric bill?" "We are rarely home. How could we be using this much electricity?"

These questions are common, especially in the summer months. How can electric bills drop so little when the house is left empty?

Set-and-Forget Appliances

With the advances in technology, homes are equipped with more electric appliances than ever before.

Most people don't pull the plug on their major appliances when they leave town because of the trouble of connecting, reconnecting and resetting their clocks. Yet, there can be big savings if appliances are left unplugged in an empty house.

Devices that owners "set and forget" have a constant power draw. The instant-on feature on a VCR, DVD player, computer, television, satellite dish, cable box or stereo consumes between 2 to 10 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity (\$0.12 to \$0.60) per month.

While the cost of running each individual appliance may not seem like much, multiply that charge by the number of appliances in a home and the sum can be significant.

Refrigerators and Freezers

A refrigerator accounts for a large amount of the energy consumed in the average American home. The appliance is very sensitive to the room temperature around it. Contrary to the common notion, door opening accounts for less than 20 percent of a refrigerator's energy use.

To save on electricity charges, concentrate on providing adequate ventilation in the kitchen especially when the house is unoccupied. High temperatures force the refrigerator to work harder and can increase its energy use as much as 50 percent during the summer.

Avoid emptying the refrigerator before leaving town. A nearly-empty fridge will have to work harder, increasing its energy consumption.

If the refrigerator is completely empty, set the thermostat to the highest (warmest) setting to reduce energy consumption 40 percent. Do not leave an empty unit unplugged as mold and mildew problems can occur.

Many homeowners have a second refrigerator or freezer in the basement. Depending on the efficiency, a unit can consume 40 to 150 kWh, or \$2.40 to \$9 a month.

Automatic defrost freezers use about 120 to 140 kWh (\$7.20 to \$8.40) a month.

Waterbeds

A conventional waterbed uses about 125 kWh (\$7.50) per month. It is easy to overlook a waterbed as a major energy user, yet the heater can run for more than eight hours a day.

Because these beds take time to regain their operating temperatures, it may not be convenient to unplug them when leaving town for a few days. Instead, consider reducing the temperature ten degrees.

Be sure to cover your waterbed with a heavy blanket or bedspread. Leaving the mattress uncovered can double the cost to heat it.

Pumps

Pool and spa pumps use 25 to 200 kWh (\$1.50 to \$12) a month.

Keeping those tropical fish happy in an aquarium can use between 10 and 150 kWh (\$0.60 to \$9).

Well and sump pumps running efficiently use approximately 5 to 20 kWh (\$0.30 to \$1.20) a month.

Water Heaters

Water heaters also continue to work when the house is empty. A standby water heater uses approximately 50 to 150 kWh (\$3 to \$9) per month. An under sink water heater uses 8 to 20 kWh (\$0.48 to \$1.20).

Heating and Cooling

Many homeowners have realized how easy it is to save on heating and cooling

Bragging Rights:

Announcing NWCPUD's New Arrival

Northern Wasco County PUD welcomes our newest employee, Stacie Agidius, who began working as a payroll/credit clerk in June.

Stacie manages our employee payroll and helps make payment arrangements for customers who are having difficulty paying their bills. She also monitors the accounts that have been sent to collections.

Stacie graduated from The Dalles High School and has worked in a variety of office settings prior to coming to NWCPUD. She lives in Dallesport with her son Craig and daughter Amber.

Customers who are having trouble paying their monthly bills should contact Stacie at the PUD office rather than ignoring the bill. Failing to make a payment without notifying the office can lead to the disconnection of service. If customers notify the PUD prior to receiving the disconnect notice, they can preserve their credit history.

If you are having trouble paying your monthly electric bill, please call Stacie at 296-2226. ■



Stacie Agidius, payroll/credit clerk

costs by installing an automatic thermostat. Yet, leaving on vacation without readjusting the settings—especially during triple-digit summer days or a February cold snap—can bring a surprise with the next utility bill.

Learn how to program the thermostat before heading out of town. Some devices have a special vacation setting that can be set with the flick of a switch. Other styles require more effort.

Be sure to check the settings on the unit after reprogramming it. An incorrectly programmed thermostat is a problem that will continue to occur every hour the house is empty.

Even when the thermostat turns off a heat pump, the unit's crankcase heater still heats the lubricant and refrigerant. Newer heat pumps with thermostat controls still draw 20 kWh per month.

While a heat pump's crankcase heater

can be turned off at the circuit breaker or disconnect switch, homeowners must make sure to allow it to reheat the refrigerant-lubricant for a few hours before restarting the heat pump or the compressor may be damaged.

Some returning vacationers may find that waiting two or more hours before turning on a cooling system is not worth the energy savings; others who are gone over an extended period of time may find that a lower electricity bill is worth the inconvenience.

During the cold winter months, a vacant house with a thermostat set at 55 degrees may use more energy than an occupied house set at 65 degrees.

Cooking, bathing, clothes drying and other "people" activities help raise the temperature in a home. An empty house's heating system must work harder to maintain the 55-degree temperature. ■

NORTHERN WASCO COUNTY PUD

Visit our Web site at:
www.nwasco.com

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

August 4

Music in the Park.

Free concert featuring Linda Hornbuckle and Janice Scroggins, 6 p.m., The Dalles City Park.

August 7-9

Cruise the Gorge 2009.

Friday, Neon Cruise, 7p.m.
Saturday, "Show in the Shade," at Sorosis Park.
Sunday, Dallesport Drags, 10 a.m., at The Dalles Airport in Dallesport, Washington.

For information and related events, go to www.midcolumbiacarclub.org.

August 13-16

Wasco County Fair & Rodeo.

Tygh Valley.

August 15

Music in the Park.

Free concert featuring 50-piece concert band, Gorge Winds, 6 p.m., The Dalles City Park.

August 25

Northern Wasco County PUD Board Meeting.

6 p.m., 2345 River Rd., The Dalles.

Nonprofit community organizations are encouraged to promote events and activities that support, nurture and enhance the quality of life in communities served by Northern Wasco County PUD. To list an item in the community calendar, please call 298-3302.