

HOW TO SAVE MONEY ON MY ENERGY BILL

HOW TO SAVE MONEY ON MY ENERGY BILL IS A COMMON CONCERN FOR HOUSEHOLDS EVERYWHERE, IMPACTING BOTH BUDGETS AND ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINTS. FORTUNATELY, THERE ARE NUMEROUS EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES AND PRACTICAL TIPS THAT CAN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE YOUR MONTHLY UTILITY EXPENSES. THIS COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE EXPLORES A WIDE RANGE OF METHODS, FROM SIMPLE BEHAVIORAL CHANGES TO LARGER INVESTMENTS, ALL AIMED AT HELPING YOU LOWER YOUR ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND, CONSEQUENTLY, YOUR BILLS. WE WILL DELVE INTO OPTIMIZING YOUR HOME'S HEATING AND COOLING, IMPROVING INSULATION, MANAGING YOUR LIGHTING AND APPLIANCE USAGE, AND EVEN UNDERSTANDING YOUR ENERGY PROVIDER'S OPTIONS. BY IMPLEMENTING THESE ACTIONABLE STEPS, YOU CAN ACHIEVE SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS AND CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.

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UNDERSTANDING YOUR ENERGY CONSUMPTION

THE FIRST CRUCIAL STEP IN LEARNING HOW TO SAVE MONEY ON YOUR ENERGY BILL IS TO GAIN A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF WHERE YOUR ENERGY IS BEING USED. MOST UTILITY COMPANIES PROVIDE DETAILED MONTHLY STATEMENTS THAT BREAK DOWN YOUR CONSUMPTION BY KILOWATT-HOURS (KWH) FOR ELECTRICITY AND THERMS OR CUBIC FEET FOR NATURAL GAS. BY CAREFULLY REVIEWING THESE STATEMENTS, YOU CAN IDENTIFY TRENDS, PEAK USAGE TIMES, AND SIGNIFICANT SHIFTS IN CONSUMPTION THAT MIGHT INDICATE A PROBLEM OR AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SAVINGS. LOOK FOR SEASONAL VARIATIONS, AS HEATING AND COOLING TYPICALLY REPRESENT THE LARGEST PORTION OF HOME ENERGY USE.

BEYOND YOUR UTILITY BILL, MANY MODERN SMART METERS OFFER EVEN MORE GRANULAR DATA. SOME ALLOW YOU TO VIEW YOUR REAL-TIME ENERGY USAGE THROUGH ONLINE PORTALS OR DEDICATED APPS. THIS IMMEDIATE FEEDBACK CAN BE INCREDIBLY POWERFUL, HELPING YOU SEE THE DIRECT IMPACT OF TURNING OFF LIGHTS, UNPLUGGING ELECTRONICS, OR ADJUSTING YOUR THERMOSTAT. UNDERSTANDING THESE PATTERNS IS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH ALL OTHER ENERGY-SAVING STRATEGIES ARE BUILT. WITHOUT THIS KNOWLEDGE, YOU MIGHT BE MAKING EFFORTS IN AREAS THAT YIELD MINIMAL RETURNS, WHILE NEGLECTING MORE IMPACTFUL OPPORTUNITIES.

OPTIMIZING YOUR HOME'S HEATING AND COOLING

HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEMS ARE THE BIGGEST ENERGY CONSUMERS IN MOST HOMES, OFTEN ACCOUNTING FOR UP TO 50% OF TOTAL ENERGY USE. THEREFORE, OPTIMIZING THEIR EFFICIENCY IS PARAMOUNT WHEN SEEKING WAYS HOW TO SAVE MONEY ON MY ENERGY BILL. REGULAR MAINTENANCE IS KEY; ENSURE YOUR HVAC SYSTEM IS SERVICED ANNUALLY BY A QUALIFIED TECHNICIAN. THIS INCLUDES CLEANING OR REPLACING AIR FILTERS REGULARLY – DIRTY FILTERS RESTRICT AIRFLOW, FORCING THE SYSTEM TO WORK HARDER AND CONSUME MORE ENERGY. FOR A STANDARD FILTER, AIM TO REPLACE IT EVERY 1-3 MONTHS, DEPENDING ON HOUSEHOLD CONDITIONS AND FILTER TYPE.

CONSIDER UPGRADING TO A PROGRAMMABLE OR SMART THERMOSTAT. A PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTAT ALLOWS YOU TO SET DIFFERENT TEMPERATURE SCHEDULES FOR DIFFERENT TIMES OF THE DAY AND WEEK, AUTOMATICALLY ADJUSTING THE TEMPERATURE WHEN YOU'RE ASLEEP OR AWAY. A SMART THERMOSTAT GOES A STEP FURTHER, LEARNING YOUR HABITS AND ALLOWING REMOTE CONTROL VIA SMARTPHONE APPS, FURTHER ENHANCING YOUR ABILITY TO FINE-TUNE ENERGY USE. SETTING YOUR THERMOSTAT A FEW DEGREES LOWER IN WINTER (AROUND 68°F WHEN HOME AND LOWER WHEN AWAY OR SLEEPING) AND A FEW DEGREES HIGHER IN SUMMER (AROUND 78°F WHEN HOME) CAN LEAD TO SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS WITHOUT A NOTICEABLE DECREASE IN COMFORT.

SEASONAL ADJUSTMENTS AND SYSTEM USAGE

DURING COLDER MONTHS, TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PASSIVE SOLAR HEATING BY OPENING CURTAINS AND BLINDS ON SOUTH-FACING WINDOWS DURING THE DAY TO LET IN SUNLIGHT, AND CLOSING THEM AT NIGHT TO RETAIN HEAT. CONVERSELY, IN WARMER MONTHS, KEEP CURTAINS AND BLINDS CLOSED DURING THE HOTTEST PARTS OF THE DAY TO BLOCK OUT SOLAR HEAT GAIN. ENSURE THAT FURNITURE OR DRAPES ARE NOT OBSTRUCTING VENTS OR RADIATORS, AS THIS IMPEDES EFFICIENT HEAT DISTRIBUTION.

VENTILATION AND AIRFLOW MANAGEMENT

PROPERLY MANAGING VENTILATION IS ALSO CRITICAL. WHEN USING YOUR AIR CONDITIONING, AVOID RUNNING THE FAN CONTINUOUSLY UNLESS NECESSARY FOR AIR CIRCULATION. MANY SYSTEMS HAVE A "FAN AUTO" SETTING THAT ONLY RUNS THE FAN WHEN THE COOLING OR HEATING CYCLE IS ACTIVE. IF YOU HAVE CEILING FANS, USE THEM IN CONJUNCTION WITH YOUR AIR CONDITIONING IN THE SUMMER; THEY CREATE A WIND-CHILL EFFECT THAT ALLOWS YOU TO RAISE THE THERMOSTAT TEMPERATURE BY A FEW DEGREES, SAVING ENERGY WHILE MAINTAINING COMFORT. IN WINTER, SOME CEILING FANS HAVE A REVERSE SETTING TO PUSH WARM AIR THAT HAS RISEN TO THE CEILING BACK DOWN INTO THE LIVING SPACE.

IMPROVING HOME INSULATION AND SEALING

EFFECTIVE INSULATION AND SEALING ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO PREVENTING ENERGY LOSS, WHETHER IT'S HEAT ESCAPING IN THE WINTER OR COOL AIR ESCAPING IN THE SUMMER. DRAFTS AND AIR LEAKS CAN SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE YOUR HEATING AND COOLING COSTS, MAKING YOUR HVAC SYSTEM WORK OVERTIME. COMMON CULPRITS FOR AIR LEAKS INCLUDE GAPS AROUND WINDOWS AND DOORS, ELECTRICAL OUTLETS, PLUMBING PENETRATIONS, AND ATTIC HATCHES. USING CAULK AND WEATHERSTRIPPING ARE COST-EFFECTIVE WAYS TO SEAL THESE SMALL GAPS AND CRACKS.

ATTIC INSULATION IS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT BECAUSE HEAT NATURALLY RISES, AND A POORLY INSULATED ATTIC CAN BE A MAJOR SOURCE OF ENERGY LOSS. CHECK YOUR ATTIC'S INSULATION LEVELS AND CONSIDER ADDING MORE IF IT IS BELOW RECOMMENDED R-VALUES FOR YOUR CLIMATE ZONE. SIMILARLY, ENSURE YOUR WALLS AND CRAWL SPACES ARE ADEQUATELY INSULATED. THE TYPE OF INSULATION AND ITS R-VALUE (A MEASURE OF ITS RESISTANCE TO HEAT FLOW) WILL DETERMINE ITS EFFECTIVENESS.

SEALING COMMON AIR LEAKAGE POINTS

BEGIN BY INSPECTING YOUR HOME FOR OBVIOUS DRAFTS. YOU CAN USE AN INCENSE STICK OR A THIN PIECE OF PAPER TO DETECT AIRFLOW AROUND WINDOW FRAMES, DOOR FRAMES, ELECTRICAL OUTLETS, AND WHERE PIPES OR WIRES ENTER YOUR HOME. FOR LARGER GAPS, EXPANDING FOAM SEALANT CAN BE USED, WHILE SMALLER CRACKS AND OPENINGS ARE BEST ADDRESSED WITH CAULK. DON'T FORGET TO CHECK AROUND FIREPLACE DAMPERS AND ATTIC ACCESS DOORS, AS THESE CAN BE SIGNIFICANT SOURCES OF AIR LEAKAGE.

UNDERSTANDING INSULATION TYPES AND R-VALUES

DIFFERENT INSULATION MATERIALS OFFER VARYING LEVELS OF THERMAL RESISTANCE. COMMON TYPES INCLUDE FIBERGLASS BATTS, MINERAL WOOL, CELLULOSE, SPRAY FOAM, AND RIGID FOAM BOARDS. THE R-VALUE REQUIRED FOR YOUR HOME WILL DEPEND ON YOUR GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION AND THE CLIMATE ZONE. BUILDING CODES AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY GUIDELINES OFTEN PROVIDE RECOMMENDED R-VALUES FOR ATTICS, WALLS, AND FLOORS. INVESTING IN PROPER INSULATION IS A LONG-TERM STRATEGY THAT PAYS DIVIDENDS IN REDUCED ENERGY BILLS AND IMPROVED HOME COMFORT YEAR-ROUND.

SMART LIGHTING AND APPLIANCE MANAGEMENT

LIGHTING AND EVERYDAY APPLIANCES, WHILE PERHAPS NOT AS DOMINANT AS HVAC, STILL CONTRIBUTE A SIGNIFICANT PORTION TO YOUR OVERALL ENERGY BILL. MAKING SMART CHOICES ABOUT LIGHTING AND HOW YOU USE YOUR APPLIANCES CAN

LEAD TO NOTICEABLE SAVINGS OVER TIME.

SWITCHING TO LED (LIGHT EMITTING DIODE) BULBS IS ONE OF THE EASIEST AND MOST EFFECTIVE WAYS TO REDUCE LIGHTING ENERGY CONSUMPTION. LEDs USE UP TO 80% LESS ENERGY THAN INCANDESCENT BULBS AND LAST MUCH LONGER, MEANING FEWER REPLACEMENTS AND LESS WASTE. MAKE IT A HABIT TO TURN OFF LIGHTS WHEN YOU LEAVE A ROOM, EVEN IF YOU'RE ONLY STEPPING OUT FOR A FEW MINUTES. CONSIDER INSTALLING MOTION SENSORS OR TIMERS FOR LIGHTS IN AREAS THAT ARE FREQUENTLY UNOCCUPIED BUT MIGHT BE LEFT ON, SUCH AS HALLWAYS OR OUTDOOR SPACES.

EFFICIENT APPLIANCE USAGE AND MAINTENANCE

WHEN IT COMES TO APPLIANCES, LOOK FOR THE ENERGY STAR LABEL WHEN PURCHASING NEW ONES. THESE APPLIANCES ARE CERTIFIED TO MEET STRICT ENERGY EFFICIENCY GUIDELINES SET BY THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY. EVEN WITH EFFICIENT APPLIANCES, HOW YOU USE THEM MATTERS. FOR YOUR REFRIGERATOR AND FREEZER, ENSURE THE DOOR SEALS ARE TIGHT BY CLOSING THE DOOR ON A PIECE OF PAPER; IF YOU CAN EASILY PULL IT OUT, THE SEAL NEEDS ATTENTION. KEEP THEM FULL BUT NOT OVERSTUFFED, AS THIS HELPS MAINTAIN A CONSISTENT TEMPERATURE AND REDUCES ENERGY USE.

FOR LAUNDRY, WASH CLOTHES IN COLD WATER WHENEVER POSSIBLE, AS HEATING WATER ACCOUNTS FOR A SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNT OF ENERGY. CLEAN THE LINT FILTER IN YOUR DRYER AFTER EVERY LOAD TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY AND REDUCE DRYING TIME. WHENEVER POSSIBLE, OPT TO AIR-DRY CLOTHES. FOR DISHWASHERS, RUN THEM ONLY WHEN THEY ARE FULL AND USE THE AIR-DRY SETTING INSTEAD OF HEAT-DRY. WHEN IT COMES TO COOKING, USING SMALLER APPLIANCES LIKE MICROWAVES OR TOASTER OVENS CAN BE MORE ENERGY-EFFICIENT THAN A FULL-SIZED OVEN FOR SMALLER MEALS.

PHANTOM LOAD AND ENERGY VAMPIRES

MANY ELECTRONIC DEVICES CONTINUE TO DRAW POWER EVEN WHEN THEY ARE TURNED OFF, A PHENOMENON OFTEN REFERRED TO AS "PHANTOM LOAD" OR "ENERGY VAMPIRES." THIS INCLUDES DEVICES LIKE TELEVISIONS, COMPUTERS, GAME CONSOLES, CHARGERS, AND EVEN SOME COFFEE MAKERS. TO COMBAT THIS, UNPLUG DEVICES WHEN NOT IN USE, OR USE SMART POWER STRIPS THAT CAN CUT POWER TO MULTIPLE DEVICES SIMULTANEOUSLY WHEN THEY ARE NOT IN ACTIVE USE. THIS SIMPLE HABIT CAN CUMULATIVELY SAVE A SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT OF ENERGY THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

WATER HEATING EFFICIENCY

WATER HEATING IS ANOTHER MAJOR ENERGY CONSUMER IN HOUSEHOLDS, TYPICALLY RANKING SECOND ONLY TO HEATING AND COOLING. REDUCING THE AMOUNT OF HOT WATER YOU USE AND ENSURING YOUR WATER HEATER IS OPERATING EFFICIENTLY CAN LEAD TO SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS. LOWERING YOUR WATER HEATER'S THERMOSTAT SETTING IS A STRAIGHTFORWARD WAY TO REDUCE ENERGY USAGE. MOST MANUFACTURERS SET WATER HEATERS TO 140°F, BUT 120°F IS USUALLY SUFFICIENT FOR MOST HOUSEHOLDS AND CAN SAVE ENERGY WITHOUT A NOTICEABLE DIFFERENCE IN COMFORT. AIM TO SET IT NO HIGHER THAN 120°F.

INSULATING YOUR WATER HEATER TANK, ESPECIALLY IF IT'S AN OLDER MODEL, CAN ALSO MAKE A DIFFERENCE. A WATER HEATER BLANKET CAN REDUCE HEAT LOSS, MEANING YOUR HEATER WON'T HAVE TO WORK AS HARD TO MAINTAIN THE SET TEMPERATURE. ALSO, INSULATE THE FIRST FEW FEET OF HOT WATER PIPES EXTENDING FROM THE TANK. REGULARLY DRAINING SEDIMENT FROM THE BOTTOM OF YOUR WATER HEATER TANK CAN IMPROVE ITS EFFICIENCY AND EXTEND ITS LIFESPAN, AS SEDIMENT BUILDUP FORCES THE HEATER TO WORK HARDER TO HEAT THE WATER.

REDUCING HOT WATER CONSUMPTION

SIMPLE CHANGES IN YOUR DAILY ROUTINES CAN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCE HOT WATER USAGE. INSTALL LOW-FLOW SHOWERHEADS AND FAUCET AERATORS TO REDUCE THE VOLUME OF WATER USED WITHOUT SACRIFICING PRESSURE. FIX ANY LEAKY FAUCETS IMMEDIATELY, AS A SINGLE DRIPPING HOT WATER FAUCET CAN WASTE A SURPRISING AMOUNT OF ENERGY AND WATER OVER TIME. WHEN DOING LAUNDRY, AS MENTIONED EARLIER, USE COLD WATER WHENEVER POSSIBLE. FOR WASHING DISHES, SCRAPE PLATES CLEAN RATHER THAN RINSING THEM BEFORE PLACING THEM IN THE DISHWASHER, AND ALWAYS RUN THE DISHWASHER ONLY WHEN IT IS FULLY LOADED.

LEVERAGING RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ENERGY PROVIDER OPTIONS

FOR THOSE LOOKING FOR MORE SIGNIFICANT LONG-TERM SAVINGS AND A REDUCED ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT, EXPLORING RENEWABLE ENERGY OPTIONS AND UNDERSTANDING YOUR ENERGY PROVIDER'S OFFERINGS IS A WISE MOVE. INSTALLING SOLAR PANELS CAN DRAMATICALLY REDUCE OR EVEN ELIMINATE YOUR ELECTRICITY BILLS OVER TIME, THOUGH IT REQUIRES AN INITIAL INVESTMENT. MANY GOVERNMENTS AND UTILITY COMPANIES OFFER INCENTIVES, TAX CREDITS, OR REBATES FOR SOLAR INSTALLATIONS, WHICH CAN SIGNIFICANTLY OFFSET THE UPFRONT COSTS. EVALUATING YOUR HOME'S SUITABILITY FOR SOLAR, CONSIDERING FACTORS LIKE ROOF ORIENTATION, SHADING, AND LOCAL REGULATIONS, IS THE FIRST STEP.

BEYOND SELF-GENERATION, INVESTIGATE IF YOUR ENERGY PROVIDER OFFERS GREEN ENERGY PLANS. MANY UTILITIES NOW ALLOW CUSTOMERS TO OPT INTO PLANS WHERE A PORTION OR ALL OF THEIR ELECTRICITY IS SOURCED FROM RENEWABLE RESOURCES LIKE WIND OR SOLAR. WHILE THESE PLANS MAY SOMETIMES COME AT A SLIGHT PREMIUM, THEY OFFER A WAY TO SUPPORT RENEWABLE ENERGY DEVELOPMENT AND REDUCE YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT. ADDITIONALLY, SOME PROVIDERS OFFER TIME-OF-USE (TOU) ELECTRICITY RATES, WHERE THE COST OF ELECTRICITY VARIES DEPENDING ON THE TIME OF DAY. IF YOU CAN SHIFT YOUR HIGH-ENERGY USAGE ACTIVITIES (LIKE RUNNING THE DISHWASHER OR DOING LAUNDRY) TO OFF-PEAK HOURS WHEN ELECTRICITY IS CHEAPER, YOU CAN SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER YOUR BILLS.

BEHAVIORAL CHANGES FOR ENERGY SAVINGS

BEYOND ALL THE TECHNOLOGICAL UPGRADES AND INSULATION PROJECTS, FUNDAMENTAL BEHAVIORAL CHANGES CAN BE INCREDIBLY EFFECTIVE IN REDUCING ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND, CONSEQUENTLY, YOUR UTILITY BILLS. THESE ARE OFTEN THE MOST ACCESSIBLE AND IMMEDIATE WAYS FOR ANYONE TO START SAVING MONEY ON THEIR ENERGY BILL. CULTIVATING ENERGY-CONSCIOUS HABITS IS A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO LONG-TERM SAVINGS.

MAKE IT A FAMILY OR HOUSEHOLD EFFORT TO BE MINDFUL OF ENERGY USE. SIMPLE REMINDERS TO TURN OFF LIGHTS, UNPLUG CHARGERS, AND SHUT OFF ELECTRONICS WHEN NOT IN USE CAN MAKE A COLLECTIVE DIFFERENCE. REGULARLY CHECK THAT WINDOWS AND DOORS ARE FULLY CLOSED BEFORE TURNING ON THE HEATING OR COOLING. DURING EXTREME WEATHER, AVOID OPENING AND CLOSING EXTERNAL DOORS FREQUENTLY. CONSIDER UNPLUGGING APPLIANCES THAT DRAW PHANTOM POWER, SUCH AS ENTERTAINMENT CENTERS, COMPUTERS, AND CHARGERS, WHEN THEY ARE NOT IN USE. EVEN SMALL ACTIONS, WHEN PERFORMED CONSISTENTLY, ACCUMULATE INTO SIGNIFICANT ENERGY AND COST SAVINGS OVER TIME.

MINDFUL USAGE HABITS

CONSCIOUSLY REDUCE THE DEMAND FOR HEATING AND COOLING BY DRESSING APPROPRIATELY FOR THE SEASON. IN WINTER, WEAR WARMER CLOTHES INDOORS SO YOU CAN SET THE THERMOSTAT A BIT LOWER. IN SUMMER, WEAR LIGHTER CLOTHING AND USE FANS TO STAY COOL, ALLOWING YOU TO RAISE THE THERMOSTAT A FEW DEGREES. MAKE A HABIT OF TURNING OFF LIGHTS WHEN LEAVING ANY ROOM. THIS PRACTICE ALONE, WHEN ADOPTED UNIVERSALLY, CAN LEAD TO A NOTICEABLE REDUCTION IN ELECTRICITY USAGE.

APPLIANCE AND ELECTRONIC DEVICE PRACTICES

WHEN USING APPLIANCES, ALWAYS ENSURE THEY ARE FULL BEFORE RUNNING THEM TO MAXIMIZE EFFICIENCY. FOR ELECTRONICS, UTILIZE POWER STRIPS TO EASILY TURN OFF MULTIPLE DEVICES AT ONCE, ELIMINATING STANDBY POWER CONSUMPTION. FOR COMPUTERS, ENABLE POWER-SAVING SETTINGS AND SHUT THEM DOWN COMPLETELY WHEN NOT IN USE FOR EXTENDED PERIODS. FOR MOBILE DEVICE CHARGERS, UNPLUG THEM FROM THE WALL WHEN NOT ACTIVELY CHARGING A DEVICE, AS THEY CONTINUE TO DRAW POWER.

Q: WHAT IS THE SINGLE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY TO SAVE MONEY ON MY ENERGY BILL?

A: WHILE MANY STRATEGIES CONTRIBUTE TO SAVINGS, OPTIMIZING YOUR HOME'S HEATING AND COOLING SYSTEM AND IMPROVING ITS INSULATION ARE GENERALLY THE MOST IMPACTFUL WAYS TO REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND LOWER YOUR BILLS, AS THESE SYSTEMS ARE TYPICALLY THE LARGEST ENERGY USERS.

Q: HOW OFTEN SHOULD I REPLACE THE AIR FILTER IN MY HVAC SYSTEM?

A: YOU SHOULD AIM TO REPLACE YOUR HVAC AIR FILTER EVERY 1-3 MONTHS. THE EXACT FREQUENCY DEPENDS ON THE TYPE OF FILTER, THE NUMBER OF PETS IN YOUR HOME, AND THE OVERALL AIR QUALITY. CHECKING IT MONTHLY AND REPLACING IT WHEN IT APPEARS DIRTY IS A GOOD PRACTICE.

Q: ARE LED LIGHT BULBS REALLY WORTH THE UPFRONT COST?

A: YES, LED LIGHT BULBS ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE ENERGY-EFFICIENT AND LAST MUCH LONGER THAN INCANDESCENT OR CFL BULBS. WHILE THEIR INITIAL COST MIGHT BE HIGHER, THEY LEAD TO SUBSTANTIAL SAVINGS ON YOUR ELECTRICITY BILL OVER THEIR LIFESPAN, OFTEN PAYING FOR THEMSELVES WITHIN A YEAR OR TWO.

Q: WHAT IS "PHANTOM LOAD" AND HOW CAN I REDUCE IT?

A: PHANTOM LOAD, ALSO KNOWN AS STANDBY POWER, IS THE ENERGY CONSUMED BY ELECTRONIC DEVICES WHEN THEY ARE TURNED OFF BUT STILL PLUGGED INTO AN OUTLET. YOU CAN REDUCE IT BY UNPLUGGING DEVICES WHEN NOT IN USE OR BY USING SMART POWER STRIPS THAT CAN CUT POWER TO MULTIPLE DEVICES SIMULTANEOUSLY.

Q: CAN SEALING DRAFTS REALLY MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN MY ENERGY BILL?

A: ABSOLUTELY. AIR LEAKS AROUND WINDOWS, DOORS, AND OTHER OPENINGS CAN ALLOW HEATED OR COOLED AIR TO ESCAPE, FORCING YOUR HVAC SYSTEM TO WORK HARDER. SEALING THESE DRAFTS WITH CAULK AND WEATHERSTRIPPING IS A COST-EFFECTIVE WAY TO IMPROVE YOUR HOME'S ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND REDUCE YOUR ENERGY BILLS.

Q: HOW DOES A SMART THERMOSTAT HELP SAVE MONEY?

A: A SMART THERMOSTAT LEARNS YOUR HABITS AND CAN BE PROGRAMMED TO ADJUST THE TEMPERATURE AUTOMATICALLY WHEN YOU'RE ASLEEP OR AWAY FROM HOME. MANY ALSO OFFER REMOTE ACCESS VIA SMARTPHONE APPS, ALLOWING YOU TO MAKE ADJUSTMENTS ON THE GO, ENSURING YOU'RE NOT UNNECESSARILY HEATING OR COOLING AN EMPTY HOUSE.

Q: IS INSULATING MY WATER HEATER TANK A WORTHWHILE INVESTMENT?

A: YES, ESPECIALLY FOR OLDER WATER HEATER MODELS. INSULATING THE TANK CAN REDUCE HEAT LOSS, MEANING YOUR WATER HEATER WON'T HAVE TO CYCLE AS OFTEN TO MAINTAIN THE SET TEMPERATURE, LEADING TO ENERGY SAVINGS.

Q: WHAT ARE TIME-OF-USE (TOU) ELECTRICITY RATES?

A: TIME-OF-USE RATES MEAN THE PRICE OF ELECTRICITY FLUCTUATES THROUGHOUT THE DAY, TYPICALLY BEING MORE EXPENSIVE DURING PEAK DEMAND HOURS (OFTEN LATE AFTERNOON/EARLY EVENING) AND CHEAPER DURING OFF-PEAK HOURS (LIKE OVERNIGHT). SHIFTING ENERGY-INTENSIVE TASKS TO OFF-PEAK TIMES CAN LEAD TO SAVINGS.

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Additional written evidence is contained in Volume 3, available on the Committee website at www.parliament.uk/ecc. For Volume 1: Report, see (ISBN 9780215052193)

how to save money on my energy bill: Food for Thought Colleen M. Heflin, Madonna Harrington Meyer, 2025-09-05 While food insecurity among households with children often makes the headlines, a quieter issue that receives much less attention is the food insecurity faced by older adults. In 2023, over nine percent of Americans age sixty and older were food insecure. Without policy intervention, that number is only expected to grow as the U.S. population continues to age. In Food for Thought social policy scholar Colleen M. Heflin and sociologist Madonna Harrington Meyer illuminate the challenges faced by food insecure older adults. Through analysis of national data sets and interviews with lower income older adults, Heflin and Harrington Meyer describe why many older adults do not have enough money to afford food and other essentials. As a result of chronic economic disadvantage, food insecure older adults are often forced to make budget trade-offs between food and other expenses. In these trade-offs, food typically ranks below housing and energy costs and competes with other household bills, such as medical costs, transportation, and phone and internet coverage. While finances play a large role, nonfinancial factors, such as poor physical, cognitive, and mental health, access to healthy food, and transportation challenges, also contribute to food insecurity in old age. In the face of these difficulties, food insecure older adults may go hungry, skip meals, or eat unhealthy foods to help make ends meet. While SNAP and community-based programs, such as food pantries and home delivered meals, are intended to help address the issue of food insecurity, they are typically inadequate to address the needs of food insecure older adults. SNAP has enrollment and maintenance procedures that are particularly difficult for older adults to navigate, pays out an insufficient amount of money to cover food costs, and varies greatly by state. Availability of community programs varies by municipality, often lacks nutritious foods that are complementary to health conditions common among older adults, and can be difficult to access due to a lack of reliable transportation, disability, or cost. Heflin and Harrington Meyer advocate for addressing all the issues that increase older adults' risk of food insecurity, not just financial barriers. They suggest updating food insecurity screening tools to include these factors, increasing SNAP benefits and income support for older adults, and other policies to help combat food insecurity in older adults. Food for Thought highlights the increasingly important issue of food insecurity in old age and lays bare the overlooked challenges faced by food insecure older adults.

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of the wall's completion, however, it was covered in colorful chalk dreams as people stopped and reflected on their lives. Since then, more than two hundred walls have been created by people all over the world. This inspiring book is a celebration of these walls. Filled with our hopes, fears, humor, and heartbreak, it's a reminder of our shared connections and a chance to contemplate life's most important question--

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