

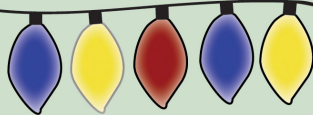
Watts Up?

www.ravallielectric.com
service@ravallielectric.com

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Ravalli Electric Co-op

Corvallis, Montana



Light up holiday savings with LEDs

Decorating with lights this holiday season? Consider light-emitting diodes (LEDs). They cost more initially but last twice as long as traditional lights, and you'll recover the difference in three to four years.

- **Efficient.** LEDs use between 1 kWh and 3 kWh of energy, compared to between 12 kWh and 105 kWh for traditional lights, saving \$11 every holiday season.
- **Durable.** LEDs last about 4,000 hours. They're also made of plastic and less likely to break.
- **Don't want to use LEDs?** Consider trimming back the number of hours your traditional lights are on to six hours or less each day.

Sources:
Consumer Reports,
Alliance to Save Energy



It's not too early to learn how to enjoy an EverGREEN Holiday Season

■ Get the most out of energy during the holidays

By John Bruce

Holidays are a festive time of year, with gifts, fun decorations, family visits, and lots of laughter. But they can also ring in extra energy use for heating, decorative lights, and more. So what steps can you take to make sure the holidays don't leave a surprise "gift" on your next electric bill?

One of the most popular ways to save energy without dimming holiday cheer is switching to light-emitting diode (LED) holiday lights. These long-lasting and energy efficient lights have been used for years in vehicles to let you know when you're low on gas or need an oil change. Over the past few years, prices have dropped low enough to make these bulbs cost-effective for decorative use.

On the plus side, LEDs last longer than traditional incandescent lights. They run cool and colors don't fade over time. Best of all, they use about a tenth of the energy for the same amount of light.

The news isn't all cheery. Decorative LEDs cost much more than strands of typical lights – up to \$40 or more to outfit a tree, according to Consumer Reports, an independent product tester. But over time, the higher investment pays off. When Consumer Reports compared LEDs and incandescent holiday lights in 2007, they found LEDs use between 1 and 3 kWh of energy, compared to between 12 to 105 kWh for traditional lights. This translates into a savings of up to \$11 every year. Because LEDs are more durable, lasting more than 4,000 hours while incandescent bulbs burn out by the 2,000 hour mark, the initial investment pays dividends over the long haul.

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EXPERIENCE THE WONDER OF WASHINGTON

For over 40 years, electric cooperatives have sponsored high school students from across America to visit the nation's capitol and meet their members of congress. You could be part of this tremendous opportunity.

REMINDER: The Youth to Washington Tour essays are due at Ravalli Electric Co-op by November 30, 2010. See www.ravallielectric.com for more details.



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Learn about Medications to Ensure Safety

By Magen Howard

Medications exist to make us feel better. But when taken incorrectly, they carry serious consequences.

Incorrectly using medications increases the chance of severe medical complications or even death. There's a price tag with it, too – more than \$177 billion annually in added prescriptions, hospital admissions, doctor calls, emergency room visits, and nursing home admissions, according to the American Pharmacists Association.



Over-the-counter (OTC) drugs pose as much risk as prescription medications. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, too much acetaminophen – the active ingredient in Tylenol – can cause liver damage; overuse of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen, can lead to stomach bleeding and kidney disease. Of course, the ability for drugs to negatively interact with each other increases with the amount of medications taken.

The following tips, compiled by the American Pharmacists Association and the Consumer Health Product Association's education arm, OTCSafety.org, can help you better manage your medications.

Be informed. Talk to your pharmacist and doctor. Ask when and how to take your medication; what to do if you miss a dose; potential side effects; and how your medications might interact with other drugs you're taking.

Know the facts. Read the label and look at the medicine as soon as you pick up your prescription. Question any unexplained changes in the medication size, color, markings, amounts, or doses.

Read the label. On OTC medications, always read and follow the Drug Facts label. The active ingredients section of the label is especially important if you're taking more than one medicine – to make sure you're not taking too much of the same active ingredient. Never take more than one medicine with the same active ingredient unless told to do so by a doctor.

Share information. Create a list of all the medications you're taking – including vitamins and natural supplements – and share it with all of your health-care professionals. This helps to prevent drug interactions.

Treat your symptoms. When taking OTC medications, choose those that treat only the symptoms you have, so you take only the active ingredients you need.

Tips for children's OTC medications

Children have special medications, so take special care when administering them. Keep in mind these tips from OTCSafety.org, the education arm of the Consumer Health Product Association:

- ➔ Never give a child medicine intended for adults. Do not try to estimate a child's dose of an adult medication.
- ➔ Use the measuring device that comes with the medicine. A kitchen spoon could deliver the wrong dose of medicine.
- ➔ Do not use oral cough and cold medicines for children younger than 4.
- ➔ Never give medications that contain aspirin to a child for cold or flu symptoms unless directed to do so by a doctor.
- ➔ Keep all medicines out of sight, and avoid telling children any medicine tastes like candy.

Sources: American Pharmacists Association, Institute for Safe Medicine Practices, Consumer Health Product Association Educational Foundation, U.S. Food & Drug Administration

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.



Plug-in for Energy Savings

A recent study funded by the state of Minnesota and Minnesota Power Company titled “Electricity Savings Opportunities for Home Electronic and Other Plug-In Devices in Minnesota Homes” offers new information on how much electricity home electronics use. The study looks at data collected on over 700 devices in 50 homes in Minnesota from December 2008 through October 2009.

The study estimates that plug-in devices such as TVs, computers, and audio equipment consume 15-30% of a home’s typical energy use. Most of these devices use electricity all the time with functions such as display clocks or remote control response. The standby electricity these devices consume accounts for about 4% of the total.

Researchers at the Energy Center of Wisconsin scoured the data looking for ways homeowners in the study could reduce electricity use from the plug-in devices. Their goal was to come up with five low cost or no-cost ways to save at least 25 kWh per year. Here is what they found:

- Enable computer power management functions on home computers
- Manually unplug devices that draw standby power when not in use
- Manually turn off devices that are left on but not in use
- Use “smart” power strips on peripheral devices such as DVD players when the main device like a TV is turned off
- Use timers to turn devices on and off at certain times of the day



The enabling of computer power management functions on home computers was the best opportunity for savings. Their data identified that approximately two-thirds of the desk top computers in the survey were left on all the time or were idle for long periods each day. The monitored data suggested that 75% of the power consumed by the computers was when no one was using them!

Both meter data and occupancy sensor data were analyzed to suggest that enabling sleep/hibernate functions on the study computers could have reduced their electricity consumption by 50%. By simply changing the computer setting, homeowners could see a 3% savings in electricity. It should be noted that most of the study computers were purchased before 2007 when power management functions were typically disabled.

Other devices that accounted for the most savings potential in the study homes were:

- Compact stereo systems — these systems consumed 5-20 watts of electricity and were rarely used
- Older CRT TVs — they drew 10 watts or more in standby power
- Computer printers — drawing 4-8 watts of standby power and typically only used a few minutes a week
- TV peripherals, like VCRs and DVD players, that are rarely used

Copies of the study are available from the Energy Center of Wisconsin at: www.ecw.org/plugload or contact our Member Services Department for more information.

“EverGREEN” continued from page 1

Whether or not you fork out extra bucks to switch to LEDs, it’s a good idea to turn off your holiday lights before you go to bed. Consider installing timers to reduce the amount of time your holiday lights are on. Just 10 incandescent strands lit for 13 hours a day can easily add more than \$50 to an electric bill. Limit light displays to no more than six hours nightly.

Lights aren’t the only holiday addition impacting your electric bill – family guests add to your costs, too. Because everyone wants to stay toasty during colder holiday months, heating usually accounts for the lion’s share of cold-weather energy costs. Extra guests translate into extra water to heat for showers.

Make sure to set your thermostat as low as comfort permits. Each degree above 68 degrees adds 2 percent to 3 percent to the amount of energy needed to heat your home. Conversely, you’ll save by lowering your thermostat (and leaving it there).

You can expect extra guests to strain your electric water heater – folks often take longer showers in colder weather, increasing water-heating costs. Before guests arrive consider installing a low-flow showerhead to reduce the amount of water used, and try to keep showers to six minutes or less.

Finally, in the average home, 75 percent of the electricity used to power electronic gifts and gadgets is used while the products are off. This phantom power use can be avoided by unplugging the items or using a power strip.

To learn more about ways to cut home energy use, visit www.TogetherWeSave.com.

Sources: Consumer Reports, U.S. Department of Energy

John Bruce is a freelance writer based in South Carolina. He writes on energy efficiency 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.

November is the month to honor and support our VETERANS and to give thanks for all that we have.

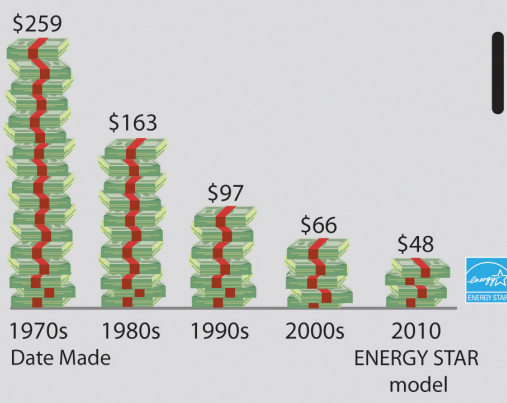


Ravalli Electric Co-op will be closed Thursday, November 11 for the Veterans Day Holiday and Thursday and Friday, November 25 and 26 for the Thanksgiving Holiday.



The Cost of Cool Food


If your fridge dates from the 1980s, you could save more than \$100 each year by replacing it with an ENERGY STAR qualified model. Compare the average annual electricity costs for refrigerators manufactured in the following years:



Date Made	Average Annual Electricity Cost
1970s	\$259
1980s	\$163
1990s	\$97
2000s	\$66
2010 ENERGY STAR model	\$48

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Find the Hidden Number



We will hide three account numbers this month in our “Watts Up?” pages. If you find your account number, call the office at 961-3001 by the 20th of the magazine month and you get a \$30 credit on your electric bill. Good luck!

Ravalli County Electric Cooperative, Inc.

P.O. Box 190
Corvallis, MT 59828

Phone (406) 961-3001
Fax (406) 961-3230

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