

# Small Tips for lowering your PSE&G Bill

Saving energy in your home doesn't require a major investment of money—or even your time. This Housewarming guide offers ideas that will cost you little or nothing. Some will save you a lot of money, others perhaps only a few dollars a year.

## Home Heating

- You've heard it before, but the savings make it bear repeating: Turn down the thermostat. Reduce the temperature from 70° to 65° while you're home, and turn it down to 60° or 55° while you're away or asleep, and cut your heating bill by about 25 percent.
- Close a bedroom door and heat register during the day, or close off an unused room entirely, and save about \$50 a year.
- Open shades to let in the sun's warmth—close them at night to keep heat inside.
- Lock windows. It tightens the seal to stop heat leaks.

## Appliances

- Turn up the temperature a little in your refrigerator and save quite a few dollars.
- If you need a new refrigerator, take a minute to ask the dealer about energy efficient models. The savings are astounding. Look for a refrigerator with the ENERGY STAR logo.
- Save half the energy your dishwasher uses by not using the dry cycle.
- Turn off/unplug appliances you're not using, especially while you're away for a few days (don't forget the water bed heater; it's a real energy hog).

## The Refrigerator

The refrigerator is only a single appliance, yet by itself it is typically the third largest part of your energy bill. If you are facing a major repair bill on an older model, it's probably wise to invest that money in a new refrigerator. Today's new energy efficient models will easily cut at least \$100 a year from your electric bill. All new models come with information on energy use. Use this information in your buying decision. Meanwhile, here are several things you can do to help reduce your refrigerator's energy consumption:

- Make sure the gasket between the door and compartment seals tightly by closing the door on a dollar bill and tugging on it. There should be resistance when you pull on the bill. Do this in several spots around the door. If you find a loose area, you might only have to clean the gasket. If it is loose or torn, you may be able to fix it with glue. If it can't be fixed, contact a dealer that handles your model and get a new gasket.
- Keep the coils on the back or at the bottom of the refrigerator clean and cool to keep it working at peak efficiency. Periodically remove dirt and vacuum the coils.
- Place the refrigerator as far away as possible from heat sources such as stoves and radiators in order to keep the coils cool. Also leave a few inches of space between the coils and the wall to allow cooling air to circulate.
- Let hot food cool before storing it and the refrigerator will use less energy.
- Both the freezer and the refrigerator work more efficiently when relatively full. Items in the refrigerator should be spaced a little to allow air to circulate around them.
- Cover liquids. Uncovered liquids add humidity, making the refrigerator work longer.
- Invest in a refrigerator thermometer and keep the refrigerator at the proper temperature. The refrigerator compartment should be at 38° to 40° and the freezer at about 5°. For long-term storage in a separate freezer unit, the temperature should be 0°.
- Defrosting items slowly in the refrigerator will allow the frozen food to do some of the work electricity would normally perform.
- When you are gone for a long period of time, clean out the refrigerator, turn it off, and leave the door open to prevent mold.
- If you have a second refrigerator, keep it plugged-in only when necessary. Remember, it may cost about \$150 a year to keep it operating. You may not want to pay that much just to keep the extra pop cold.

## **Water Heating**

- Turn down the temperature setting. You may be surprised how low you can turn your water heater and still get water hot enough to serve your needs—all you need is 120° to 125°.
- A dripping hot water faucet can cost over \$35 a year. Fix it. Usually all it takes is a new washer.
- A water-saving showerhead can save \$40 a year.

## **Other Easy Hot Water Saving Tips**

- Take showers instead of baths. They use much less water—close the drain next time you shower—you'll see that this is true.
- Don't let the hot water run while shaving. You, in fact, get a closer shave with cold water.
- If you have an electric water heater, check into "time of day rates." This involves having your water heater come on only during "off-peak" times. Contact your utility's customer service office for details and see if this would work for you.
- Turn your water heater down to the lowest possible setting if you are going to be away for a few days.

## **Air Conditioning**

Air conditioning puts a tremendous strain on electrical generating facilities, not to mention your own checkbook so the best advice is to use other methods of keeping yourself and your house cool whenever possible. Here are a few tips to keep your air conditioners energy consumption down when you do use it:

- Set the thermostat at 78° or higher—a reason-ably comfortable and energy efficient indoor temperature. A 78° setting will save you about 15 percent or more on cooling costs over a 72° setting.
- Don't set the thermostat at a colder than normal setting. It will not cool the house any faster, but, as with the furnace, will simply overshoot the desired temperature and waste energy.
- Clean or replace filters at least once a month.
- Turn off the air conditioner when you are going to be gone for several hours and draw the shades to keep heat out. It takes less energy to re-cool the house when you return than it does to keep it cool while you are gone.

- Don't place lamps or other heat-generating devices near the thermostat since it could sense this heat and make the air conditioner run longer than needed.
- Room air conditioners should fit snugly to window frames
- Close heat ducts in the room and remove or seal up the unit with plastic after the cooling season.
- Have your central air conditioning unit checked and tuned when you have your furnace serviced.
- Periodically clean and vacuum the grills, coils and cooling fins and keep them clear of obstructions.

### **Summer Cooling Tips**

- Close shades during the day to reduce solar heat gains.
- Outdoor shading devices such as awnings reduce heat gain through a window by as much as 90 percent while letting light in.
- If you're thinking of planting trees, consider putting them by a window on the sunny side of the house for natural heat-reducing shade. See our Home Energy Guide: Save Energy with Trees.
- Leave storm windows on windows that don't need to be opened, or on windows in air conditioned rooms. They help keep the heat outside.
- Use cross ventilation. Put a fan blowing in a window on the cool side of the house which will push out hot air while pulling cool air into the rest of the house.