

## Reduce Your Water Heating Costs

Electricity lights our home, curls our hair, heats our food, and even soothes a sore muscle. However, one of the most prevalent ways we use electricity is to heat our water. Electric water heaters allow us to take hot relaxing showers, wash our clothes, and clean our dirty dishes. Electric water heaters not only provide convenience, but they provide safety by having no fuel or flame, have a low maintenance requirement, and have flexible installation.

However, the electricity needed to warm the water that helps you carry out all of your daily activities can account for a significant part of your monthly utility bill. Water heating costs are affected by the type of water heater you have, its location and efficiency, the temperature setting, and the number of gallons of hot water you use. The higher the temperature setting of the water heater, the more it will cost to operate.

To control the cost of a water heater and to improve its efficiency in your household, follow these simple tips:

- Reduce the temperature setting on your water heater to 120°F.
- Use cool or cold water when washing clothes.
- Take showers lasting five minutes or less, rather than baths. Short showers use less hot water than baths.
- Fix leaky faucets to prevent hot water from being wasted.
- Run the dishwasher only when full.
- When you go on vacation, shut off your electric water heater at the breaker, and turn the control knob to the “Pilot” or “Vacant” position.
- Periodically drain water heaters to prevent sediment build-up at the bottom of the tank, which can cause a water heater to become noisy and less efficient.
- Inspect the water heater tank periodically for signs of deterioration. Check all the tank fittings for any signs of rusting or leakage. If your water heater shows these signs, make sure to have it inspected by a licensed plumber for repair or replacement.

If you are in the process of purchasing a new water heater, you should compare the annual operating costs, as well as the price to find the best model. When looking at new water heaters, refer to the EnergyGuide label to determine the energy efficiency rating. For electric models, look for an Energy Factor of .93 or greater and with gas models look for an Energy Factor of .62 or greater.

A more efficient unit typically costs more to purchase, but it generally costs less to operate. Make sure to take into consideration the size of your family, your appliances, and water use patterns when purchasing a water heater.

### LINK for more information:

Do it Yourself - The Internet's Largest Home Improvement and Home Repair Library—a large selection of articles about water heaters. <http://www.doityourself.com/scat/waterheatersc>

