



Say 'so long' to high utility bills

By Metro Creative Connection

Utility bills are among the largest expenses homeowners have each month. Trimming utility bills can not only benefit homeowners' bottom lines, but also be prove beneficial for the environment.

Unnecessary energy consumption can drive up utility bills, costing homeowners substantial amounts of money every year. Fortunately, homeowners can take several steps to reduce unnecessary energy consumption, saving themselves money and helping the planet along the way.

• Conduct nightly energy audits. Before going to bed at night, homeowners can spend a few minutes walking around their homes making sure all devices, appliances and lights are tuned off. Devices left on when not in use may not consume significant amounts of energy on their own, but when many are left on, the resulting energy consumption can be considerable. The U.S. Department of Energy notes that unplugging cable boxes each night can save

homeowners nearly \$20 per box over the course of a year. Unplugging additional appliances each night when not in use can add to those savings while reducing excessive energy consumption.

• Lower the temperature on your water heater. Water heaters make it possible to take hot showers each morning, but when used improperly, such heaters can be very wasteful. Water heaters set at 120 F will not affect the quality of your daily showers and can help prevent scalding. But water heaters may be set at 140 F by manufacturers, and that can waste energy and pose a scalding hazard. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the cost of bringing fresh water up to 140 F can cost homeowners as much as \$400 per year. Setting water heaters to 120 F and lowering that temperature when going on vacation can save homeowners money and reduce the standby heat losses necessary to keep water at 140 F or higher.

• Clean filters more frequently. It's easy to forget about filters on heating and

air conditioning systems. But forgotten filters could be costing homeowners significant amounts of money. When neglected, HVAC filters accumulate dirt and dust, making systems work much less efficiently than they do when filters are clean. Clean filters once per month to make sure you aren't wasting money and energy when heating and cooling your home.

• Monitor your meter. If you are taking steps to reduce energy consumption but your utility bills are staying the same or even increasing, start monitoring your energy meter. Meter readers are not immune to mistakes, and the readings may be incorrect. Jot down the energy consumption figures reflected on your meter, and compare those figures to those on your utility bill, reporting any discrepancies to your utility company.

Many homeowners wish their utility bills were lower. Thankfully, homeowners can take steps to cut their energy bills and save them money while helping the environment at the same time.

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99317 - SPRAY - 2-story 2900 sq. ft., 3/2.5, open flr plan, large kitchen, stamped patio, decks, attached 2 car garage, 37'x72' shop with 2 car garage, ofc space, bath & storage, all on 6.55 ac., with views of the John Day River. **\$429,842**

99283 - MONUMENT - PRICE REDUCED - Ranch style custom home, 2500 sq. ft., on 28 +/- ac., irrigation rights, oak, tile & carpet flrs, granite counter tops & hickory cabinets, 3/3, wood & electric heat. Must see! **\$369,500**

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99321 - SPRAY - 3 bedrm, 1 bath, manufactured home w/add on., 950 sq.ft., wood & oil heat, metal roof, city water & sewer, addtl cabin 1/1, 400 sq. ft., outbdgs, on 1.57 ac. **\$59,000**

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