

# Conservation measures can reduce electric bills

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
NEWS EDITOR

As electric rates go up, consumers have the power to lower their energy bills through conservation.

December, however, can be a difficult month to conserve power.

Christmas decorations suck up electricity. The onset of cold weather makes people want to turn up the heat. Christmas vacations can mean more time at home, translating to more time running the television and other appliances. And any houseguests for the holidays means extra dishes, laundry and showers.

Some people see an increased electric bill as just another part of their Christmas budget. Pete Rosenberg of Hermiston said the collection of inflatables and lights in his front yard add about \$20 to \$30 to his December electric bill each year, but that’s “not too bad.”

“The joy outweighs the price,” he said.

Rosenberg said he enjoys seeing the lights in his yard and in other yards this time of year. Students walking home from Hermiston High School also complement the decorations.

Katie Wallace, a residential spokesperson for Energy Trust of Oregon, said family visiting for the holidays might increase a customer’s energy usage too.

“People may be doing more laundry, with houseguests,” she said.

Since most of the energy for a load of laundry comes from heating the water for the cycle, Wallace said people can conserve energy by washing clothes on the cold setting. They can also air-dry clothes, or run cycles in the dryer back-to-back to take advantage of the hot air already trapped inside the dryer from the first load.

When it comes to keeping warm this time of year, Wallace said keeping blinds and drapes open during the day helps utilize sunlight to heat the house, and closing the blinds after dark traps heat in. Placing rugs on bare floors can trap heat.

Energy Trust of Oregon recommends setting your thermostat between 58 and 62 degrees at night or when everyone will be at work all day, and 65 to 68 degrees while you’re home.

“That can help keep you comfortable but also save some energy,” she said.

Steve Meyers, spokesperson for Umatilla Electric Company, said for



Staff photo by Kathy Aney  
**The family cat hangs out near the plug-ins that electrify Pete Rosenberg’s Christmas display outside his Highland Avenue home. The Hermiston man pays about \$20 extra each month for the additional electricity.**

every degree lower that people set their thermostat in the winter, they can save about 2 percent on their heating bill. Lowering your thermostat by 10 degrees every night instead of keeping it running at the same temperature while everyone is asleep can reduce your month’s bill by 10 to 20 percent.

As people consider lowering the temperature in their home, Meyers said getting rid of drafts can make a big difference in their comfort level. UEC provides a free home energy audit, and one of the first things they do is recommend sealing up air leaks with caulk or other means.

“A lot of homes can be really leaky around the windows and doors and things like dryer vents, and it can be pretty easy and inexpensive to fix that,” he said.

Adding insulation in the attic can be more time-consuming and expensive, but there are rebates and tax credits available. Meyers said when he fixed the insulation in his own 1970s-era Hermiston home, he was able to use those incentives to cut the cost in half, and it made a “dramatic” difference to the comfort of his home in addition to saving money on heat.

Both Wallace and Meyers said small conservation measures, like setting the dishwasher to air-dry mode and unplugging devices when not in use, all add up.

It may seem counterintuitive for

organizations that make their money by selling electricity to offer up programs and information to help people use less electricity. But Meyers said building power plants is “expensive and risky” so electric utilities would rather see people conserve. Plus, he said, they want people to be able to afford to live in the area and farmers to be able to afford to keep their pumps going.

“When customers are doing well, UEC is doing well,” he said.

- Phone, laptop and tablet chargers use electricity even when they’re not charging a device, so unplug them when they’re not in use.
- Plug electronics like your television, DVD player, computer and printer into power strips that can be easily turned off when not in use.
- Let hot foods cool down before refrigerating or freezing them so your fridge doesn’t have to work so hard to cool down.
- Make sure hot air is flowing freely from your heating system by regularly cleaning and replacing filters and make sure registers are clear.
- Use a microwave or toaster oven instead of the stovetop or oven to heat food.
- Take short showers and don’t let the water in your sink run constantly while you’re brushing your teeth or washing dishes by hand.

# McDowell promoted to Herald editor

By **JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN**  
STAFF WRITER

*Hermiston Herald* and *East Oregonian* reporter Jade McDowell will step into a new role this week — as the news editor of the *Herald*.

McDowell, 29, has worked for EO Media Group since August 2013, first as an *East Oregonian* reporter, and then for both the *EO* and *Herald* once the two newsrooms merged in June 2015.

While she has handled some editorial duties for the *Herald* since February of 2018, McDowell will now be responsible for big-picture operations of the weekly paper.

“I’ll be looking at how the paper is working together as a whole, instead of just the next edition,” she said. “How can we make the paper better as a whole, help more people want to subscribe.”

She said she’d like to work on growing circulation, especially with a diverse population of readers.

“Younger families aren’t always traditional newspa-

per subscribers, but there’s a lot in the newspaper they could benefit from,” she said.

McDowell said she will continue to look to add unique sections to the *Herald*, like the Hermiston History and “Three Minutes With” segments, which don’t appear in any other company publications. She also hopes to open the paper to more community participation through guest columns and features.

“I think there are a lot of opportunities for partnerships with the schools, maybe working with aspiring student journalists,” she said.

McDowell will also continue to work as a reporter, covering city government and economic development

in western Umatilla County for the *Herald* and the *EO*.

Daniel Wattenburger, managing editor of the *East Oregonian* who shared interim editor duties with McDowell through 2018, said she is a perfect fit for the job.

“Jade is an outstanding journalist,” he said. “She’s an empathetic reporter who knows how to get the most out of a story. She’s earned the respect of the community and will serve Hermiston well.”

A graduate of Brigham Young University’s journalism program, McDowell worked as a Metro editor and Opinion editor for the college paper, *The Daily Universe*, with internships at *The Dalles Chronicle* and *The New York Daily News*. She worked for two years as a reporter at *The Dalles*

*Chronicle* before joining the *EO*.

Though she spent most of her childhood in The Dalles, McDowell got to know Hermiston long before she lived here — spending weekends and summers with relatives who lived in town.

“When they offered me the job at the *EO*, they said I could work in Hermiston or Pendleton, and I picked Hermiston,” she said. “I’m familiar with it, I liked that it was a younger, growing town, and it’s a half hour closer to home.”

Outside of work, McDowell is a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and is the president of the women’s organization for the young single adults congregation, for 18 to 30 year-olds.



Jade McDowell

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# Historical preservation delays transfer of the Umatilla Chemical Depot

By **JADE MCDOWELL**  
NEWS EDITOR

As the Columbia Development Authority continues to discuss how best to preserve historical and cultural resources at the former Umatilla Chemical Depot, they got a little bit more to work with this week.

During a CDA board meeting held via conference call on Wednesday, Dec. 19, executive director Greg Smith told board members he was in Redmond, on his way to pick up a trove of original construction plans and communications from when the depot was built in the mid-1940s.

“It fell right out of the sky and into our lap,” he said.

Smith said state Sen. Betsy Johnson (D-Scappoose) had called him and told him she had found something that would be of interest to Umatilla and Morrow counties.

Johnson’s father, Sam Johnson, owned saw mills and other lumber holdings in the Bend and Redmond area, and his business had been contracted to provide the lumber for the construction of the depot’s buildings. She offered up the construction plans and corresponding documents to the CDA to preserve as part of the depot’s historical record.

Preservation of historical and cultural resources on the former depot land — including original ruts made by the Oregon Trail and places of significance to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation — is the last piece of the puzzle before the land transfers from the U.S. Army back to local control. The CDA had hoped to have the land transferred in 2018 (and several of the preceding years) but the process will roll over into 2019.

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