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Westchester Power Provides Tips on “Downsizing” Energy Bill Costs

Consumer education campaign offers tactics to help customers save the planet and their wallets

Mount Kisco, NY (June XX, 2017) – As temperatures begin to rise, so too will many electric bills. Staying cool in the warmer months usually comes at a price—one that negatively impacts the environment and drains the wallet. Every summer, air conditioners across the country are set to high, hoping to combat the sweltering heat. While this solution offers short term relief from the heat, it takes a toll on the environment with emissions and energy use, and can lead to headaches down the road when extra digits appear on summer month bills.

[Westchester Power](#) is a community-based bulk energy purchasing program designed to increase the use of renewable energy and lower costs throughout the County. Having recently launched “emPowering Green Energy,” a consumer education program, the organization has compiled a “Top 10” list of tips to help residents keep their electric bills in check this summer.

“Cranking up the air conditioning is the standard response as the days get longer and hotter, but few people realize the environmental impact constant energy use in the summer has, let alone what it means for your electricity bill,” said Dan Welsh, program director of Westchester Power. “There are ways to find a happy medium, and doing good by the planet can also mean doing good by your wallet. Customers can help the environment and stave off painful energy bills, all the while staying cool in the summer.”

Westchester Power’s Tips to Cut Costs on Summer Energy Bills

1. Get a fixed rate electricity plan. The higher demand for electricity in the summer comes with higher rates. With a fixed kilowatt-hour rate energy plan like the Westchester Power program, you’ll be paying the same price per kWh year round, allowing you to avoid the typical summer rate increase. To help budget accordingly, consider calling your utility to set up a level billing plan, which enables you to spread your payments evenly across the year.
2. Conduct an energy audit. [Contact Energize NY](#) to perform a *complimentary* checkup on your home to identify potential energy “drainers.” An audit can establish if there are air leaks or faulty insulation which make it harder to cool your home.
3. Become a fan of fans. Fans cost significantly less to run than air conditioners, and are more than capable of keeping a room cool in the weeks leading up to the dog days of summer.
4. Know the difference between “off” and “unplugged”. Even when appliances are turned off, they can still be using energy if they are plugged in. It’s called “vampire power,” and those chargers and computers left plugged in to outlets can still suck up energy, even when not in use. Unplug electronics that are not being used, or consider hooking items up to a power strip that you can easily turn on and off when needed.

5. Install a programmable thermostat. Many homes are unoccupied throughout the day while the residents are at work and school. Rather than wasting money on cooling an empty house, a programmable thermostat can be set to a comfortable temperature so that the A/C is turned off during the day and turned on when everyone returns home.
6. Close the blinds. As the biggest source of heat, keeping the sun out of your home can go a long way in keeping the house cooler.
7. Take colder showers. With warm showers being less of a necessity in summer, try keeping the shower handle closer to the blue C than the red H. This, along with lowering the temperature of the water heater, will save energy and money by not unnecessarily warming up water.
8. Free up the vents. Make sure there isn't any furniture blocking the air flow circulation. Even moving couches and beds a few inches further from the vents allows colder air to flow better, enabling the air conditioners to work more efficiently.
9. Let those rays bake...your food! Ovens use a lot of energy and produce a lot of heat, causing strain on both the environment and your energy budget. While not a permanent replacement for the oven, a solar cooker offers an ecofriendly alternative that uses the sun's energy to cook food outside without burning fuel or heating up the house. Plus, the kids will love watching the science at work as the sun prepares dinner.
10. Update your laundry and dishwashing habits. Medium load washer settings use less than half the water and energy than full loads, so hold off on doing laundry until you can fill the machine. Opt for cooler water settings whenever possible as it takes significantly more energy to increase water temps from warm- to-hot. These same adjustments work to cut back on energy consumption for the dishwasher as well. Conserve energy altogether by air-drying your clothes and handwashing your dishes.

For more information about Westchester Power, visit <http://www.westchesterpower.org/>.

About Westchester Power

Established in May 2016, [Westchester Power](http://www.westchesterpower.org/) is a community-based bulk energy purchasing program providing residents and small business electric customers a locally chosen alternative to the state-mandated utility for energy supply. As New York's first Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), Westchester Power contracts with power suppliers to offer consumers fixed and competitive energy rates. Westchester Power is a program of Sustainable Westchester. For more information, visit <http://www.westchesterpower.org/>.