

High Power Bills

Thanks to last month's bitter cold weather, many Valley power customers are likely to experience a little sticker shock when they see their January electricity bill. It's the perfect time to take positive action to lower future bills.

FEBRUARY 8, 2018—The bitter cold may be behind us, at least for now. Still, for many people, January's power bill will reflect higher energy use needed to stay warm. We spent a lot of time that month in the teens and twenties, meaning heating systems were working overtime to keep us warm.

That was true at TVA, too. In fact, January's cold snap set a significant record: On January 18, the company hit the sixth highest winter peak at 32,513 megawatts—it was also the 14th highest all-time peak.

“A diverse portfolio helped us generate enough power to meet high demand, and the reliability of the system that we maintain in partnership with local power companies was key to ensuring we kept the lights and heat on around the Valley,” says vice president of Customer Delivery Dan Pratt.

When the thermometer goes down, your electricity tends to go up—and so do electricity bills, mostly because heaters are working harder. However, Pratt notes, Valley residents can reduce their usage through conservation efforts during these peak times as well as preparing homes to be as efficient as possible. He also points to the information offered by TVA's EnergyRight Solutions for the Home, which offers energy savings programs and shares simple, do-it-yourself home improvements.

Positive Changes

“The extreme cold is hard for most people, but it is especially hard for low and fixed-income folks like the disabled and elderly,” says Frank Rapley, TVA senior manager of EnergyRight Solutions for the Home. “TVA and your local power company care about you and we want everyone to stay warm and realize the most value for their energy use.”

Many conservation-minded residents turned down their home's thermostat by one or two degrees, Rapley says. “That may not be enough if your home's furnace is working overtime because of gaps under the door, unsealed air ducts or if you have inadequate attic insulation.”

Rapley says with [a few lifestyle changes and repairs](#), customers can realize a more comfortable and energy efficient home the next time Mother Nature turns on the deep freeze this winter (or the heat this summer).

“Staying warmer in the winter or cooler in the summer is easier if you follow these three tips,” Rapley notes.

1. Seal Leaky HVAC Ducts—Heating and cooling accounts for approximately 45 percent of your home’s energy usage. According to Rapley, hiring a qualified contractor to seal your leaky air ducts may be the single most important thing you can do to improve your home’s energy performance.

2. Mind the Gaps—According to the U.S. Department of Energy, proper air sealing of gaps and holes in the attic, crawlspace and other breaks in the thermal boundary can save 10 percent or more on your energy bills.

Rapley says many air leaks and drafts are simple to find because they are easy to feel, such as those around windows and doors. “Putting new weather-stripping around windows and doors will make your home more comfortable.”

3. Upgrade to New Lighting—Each ENERGY STAR certified bulb will save about \$4 per year in electricity costs, and pays for itself in about six months. “If you replace 10 lightbulbs now, you’ll have about \$40 more by next Christmas,” says Rapley.

Read more D.I.Y. home savings tips in our story [Winter Weather Savings Strategies](#).

Bottom Line

“Electricity is a valuable resource like gasoline, food and water, and shouldn’t be wasted,” says Rapley. “Teaching our children smart energy habits and making simple fixes to our homes not only keeps us comfortable but can also help stretch household budgets even more.”

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