

June 2014 EnergyWiseSM Tip: Swimming Pools

Many enjoy the summertime by taking a dip in their own backyard swimming pool. That enjoyment often comes at a noticeable price increase on utility bills. Did you know that a typical backyard swimming pool uses as much energy during the summer months as the rest of your house does over that same period? Here are a few ways you can reduce the cost of maintaining your pool this season.

Pool Covers. Swimming pools lose energy in a variety of ways, but evaporation is by far the largest source of energy loss. Evaporating water consumes tremendous amounts of energy. Covering a pool when it is not in use is the single most effective means of reducing pool heating costs that will yield savings of 50 percent to 70 percent.

It is best to use a cover specifically designed for swimming pools. One of the lowest-cost covers made specifically for swimming pools is the bubble (or solar) cover. Bubble covers are similar to bubble packing material except they use a thicker grade plastic. Vinyl covers are made from heavier material and have a longer life expectancy than bubble covers.

Pool covers should be used throughout the swimming season. Take the cover off just before swimming and replace the cover as soon as you are done using the pool.

Turn down the temperature. 78°F is great! In fact, the American Red Cross recommends 78°F for competitive swimming. You will use about 40 percent less energy than if you were to set it at 82°F.

Also, turn the temperature down or turn off the heater whenever the pool will not be used for several days. This will save energy and money. It is a myth that it takes more energy to heat a pool back to a desired temperature than what is saved by lowering the temperature.

Right-size the pump. You can save energy and maintain a comfortable swimming pool temperature by using a smaller, higher efficiency pump and by operating it less. A recent study shows that a 0.75 horsepower or smaller pump is generally sufficient for residential pools.

Operating the Pump. Pool pumps often run much longer than necessary. Circulating your pool's water keeps the chemicals mixed and removes debris. However, as long as the water circulates while chemicals are added, they should remain mixed. Use a skimmer or vacuum to remove large debris. Remember, longer circulation does not necessarily reduce the growth of algae. Instead, using chemicals in the water and scrubbing the walls are the best methods for controlling algae growth.

Reduce your pumping and filtration time to six hours per day. If the water does not appear clean, increase the time in half-hour increments until it does. Install a timer to control the pump's cycling. If debris is a problem, use a timer that can activate the pump for several short periods each day to keep the pool cleaner. Several short cycles keep the pool cleaner all day.

Keep the intake grates clear. Clogged drains require the pump to work harder and uses more energy. Backwash your filter appropriately. Backwashing too frequently wastes water, while not backwashing wastes energy by requiring the pump to operate longer due to the clogging debris.

Your local utility and Nebraska Public Power District want to help you make the most of the energy they provide you. That includes making the most efficient use of your swimming pool this summer. For more ideas on how you can make your home EnergyWiseSM, contact your local utility or visit www.nppd.com.