

## **April 2015 EnergyWise<sup>SM</sup> Tip: Earth Day**

Recognized every April 22, Earth Day sprouted in 1970. While some may recognize this 45<sup>th</sup> birthday party by planting a tree, walking to work, or turning in recyclables, why just celebrate one day each year? Why not every day? When you implement energy efficiency into daily life, you demonstrate your support for making the most of the energy Mother Earth and the sun provide. Here are a few simple items you can do to show your appreciation year round:

### **Install a Programmable Thermostat**

When you are not home or asleep for the night, why would you need to keep your home heated or cooled to the same temperature as when you are at home and active? If you don't have a programmable thermostat, get one and use it! If you do have one and do not use it, what's your excuse? Programmable thermostats allow you to raise and lower settings according to your regular weekly schedule. If you happen to be home and outside your normal routine, programmable thermostats are easily overridden and revert back to their programmed setpoints when the next program's time comes. Remember, heating and cooling consume half or more of the energy used in your home.

### **Set the Water Heater Temperature**

Water heating is usually the second-most user of energy in your home. More often than not, the temperature setting is above the recommended 120° Fahrenheit. If so, you're heating and holding the water temperature above the level that's necessary or safe. Note that most water heaters do not have an accurate thermometer integrated with the thermostat. Rather, you will need to use a thermometer at a water faucet to determine your actual temperature setting.

### **Install LEDs**

Let go of the old, inefficient incandescent light bulbs and install LED lamps instead. For the same amount of light, LEDs only require 20 percent of the energy. Plus, they'll last up to 50 times longer. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that over 3 billion screw-based light sockets still contain an inefficient incandescent or halogen bulb. Switching to LEDs would yield more than \$7 billion in savings for U.S. households annually.

### **Replace older Plasma Televisions**

By the late 1990s, plasma television sets were becoming the rage. Unfortunately, this huge leap in picture quality came with a corresponding leap in energy use with larger units consuming as much electricity as some microwave ovens. Though most manufacturers replaced making plasma sets and have moved on to higher quality, energy-efficient LED and LCD units, millions of these energy guzzling sets are still in use.

### **Check your set-top box**

The set-top box connected to your television to receive cable or satellite signals could be using more energy than your big screen TV alone. If your unit feels hot, it's probably inefficient. Ask your service provider for an ENERGY STAR<sup>TM</sup> version 3 box, and if you have multiple TVs, request a whole-home DVR.

### **When Finished, Unplug the Game**

About half of U.S. households have a video-game console. Though the newest models significantly reduce using power when idle, they could still consume each month as much electricity as your refrigerator. If available, set the menu to power down the unit after one hour of inactivity or less. If your system does not have this feature, unplug it when you are finished.

### **Naps and Sleep are for Computers Too**

An average desktop computer, monitor, and printer left on continuously will waste \$50 or more a year in electricity. Adjust your control-panel settings for the screen to turn off after 15 minutes of inactivity and for the computer to “power down” after 30 minutes of no use. Remember to set the screen to turn off, rather than continuously running a screen saver. Finally, turn off your computer and all peripherals if you are not going to use them for an extended time.

Your local utility and Nebraska Public Power District wish you an enjoyable Earth Day this year and hope you appreciate the value Public Power in Nebraska brings every day. For more ideas on how you can make your home or business EnergyWise<sup>SM</sup>, along with possible energy efficiency financial incentives, contact your local utility or visit [www.nppd.com](http://www.nppd.com).