

Energy Smart Tips : Water Heaters



Water heating is one of the largest energy users next to air conditioning. It can account for 14% to 25% of the energy consumed in your home. There are many ways to cut your water heating bills: use less hot water, turn down the thermostat, add a timer, unplug the water heater when not in use, insulate it or buy a more efficient water heater.

What is the best temperature setting for my water heater?

The lower the temperature setting, the lower your water heating costs will be. In most cases, 120°F should be sufficient. If you have a large family and a relatively small water heater, you may need to set it somewhat higher, but no more than 140°F.

How do I change the temperature setting on my water heater?

With an electric water heater, the thermostat controls are behind the access panels on the side of the water heater (there are usually two - one for each heating element). Be sure to turn off the power to the water heater before removing the access panels.

What is the purpose of the pressure relief valve on a water heater?

The pressure relief valve is an important safety feature. It prevents a potentially dangerous pressure build-up in the water heater in the event the thermostat malfunctions and fails to turn off the elements or burners. These valves should never be wired shut or otherwise tampered with.

Should I turn off my water heater if I plan to be away from home?

If you are away from home for more than a day or two, it is a good idea to unplug your water heater or shut off the circuit breaker in the panel box.

Will a timer on my electric water heater help reduce my bills?

Yes, for a family of four, two hours in the morning (5:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m.) and two hours in the evening (5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.), depending on water use, is sufficient. You can do the same thing with an "on/off" switch, but the timer will do it automatically.

How important is it to insulate my water heater?

It depends mainly on the location and age of the water heater. In most cases, you can easily save enough to offset the cost of insulation unless your water heater has a label or sticker telling

you not to add insulation. Be careful not to cover the thermostat and don't forget to insulate any exposed hot water pipes too.

Should I drain my water heater, and if so, how often?

It is recommended you drain a bucket of water from your hot water tank once a year to remove sediment that impedes heat transfer and lowers the efficiency of your heater.

Are there any other ways I can save on water heating?

- ▶▶ Repair leaky faucets promptly; a leaky faucet wastes gallons of water in a short period of time.
- ▶▶ Install aerating, low-flow faucets and showerheads.
- ▶▶ Take more showers than baths. Bathing uses the most hot water in the average household.
- ▶▶ Wash clothes in cold water and only run full loads in your clothes dryer.
- ▶▶ Although most water heaters last 10 to 15 years, it's best to start shopping for a new one if yours is more than seven years old. Doing some research before your water heater fails will enable you to select one that most appropriately meets your needs.

What are the advantages of installing a solar water heater?

Solar water heaters can be a cost-effective way to generate hot water for your home. The solar units are environmentally friendly and can be installed on your roof to blend with the architecture of your house. More than 1.5 million homes and businesses in the United States have invested in solar water heating systems, and surveys indicate over 94% of these customers consider the systems a good investment. Solar water heating systems are also good for the environment. Do your research before investing in a solar water heater system and see if it is feasible to install in your home.



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