

Beat the peak: strategic power use leads to summer energy savings

By Derrill Holly

As warmer weather sets in, our thoughts on keeping the house comfortable switch from heating to cooling. But as temperatures rise and air conditioners are switched on, looking for ways to improve energy efficiency at home can help you and Verdigris Valley Electric Cooperative reduce demand, saving energy and money.

Making small adjustments in when, where and how you use electricity won't only help control your energy costs, but it can also help keep temperatures in your home more pleasant on sultry days.

Housework hiatus

Avoiding peak energy costs is a good reason to put some chores on hold, at least until power demand dips. Consider some of the jobs one kilowatt hour (kwh) of electricity can do before you use it:

- Wash three loads of laundry
- Complete one dryer cycle
- Vacuum rugs in two average homes
- Iron five shirts
- Run three cycles in a loaded dishwasher

All of these activities can be done outside of peak demand periods, also known as peak hours.

Love 78

Your heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system or heat pump can play a huge part in controlling your energy use year-round, even if family comfort is a top priority.

At 78 degrees, most people are comfortable outside, so why not indoors? Most people aren't sensitive enough to notice much of a difference in air temperature whether the thermostat is set at 73 or raised to 78. But the closer your air conditioner or heat pump setting is to the outdoor temperature, the less your unit will run.

Each degree of temperature difference represents a percentage of the total cooling load. That means that when temperatures are in the high 80s, you could reduce your cooling demand by 10 to 15 percent for each degree above 75 degrees.

Fans offer an economical alternative to air conditioning on mild days and they can pitch in for comfort as temperatures climb. The key is evaporative cooling. At lower settings, a little air blowing across a room helps to bring down humidity levels.

When used in conjunction with your cooling system, set ceiling fans to blow air downward instead of pulling warmer air upward to get the most value in your cooling zone. Table and ceiling fans

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Change Habits to BEAT THE PEAK

You can beat the peak (and save money!) by decreasing your power use when energy demand and prices are at their highest. Here are a few tips to help you get started:

Laundry for Less:

Full loads mean fewer cycles, and washers and dryers run in the late evenings add less heat and humidity to the home. Energy can cost less outside of peak hours.

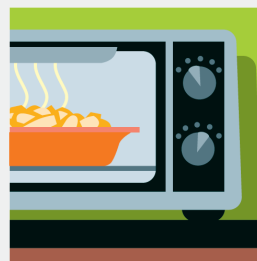


Cool Off/Calm Down:

Turn off unnecessary lighting and electronics that generate heat, resist the urge to turn down the thermostat and remember, lower fan settings use less energy.

Intramural Competition:

Online gaming with each active player using their own computer, display, gaming console and internet connection gets pricey. Play each other at home on one screen and save.



Countertop Convenience:

Range or oven cooking can really warm up a kitchen. Microwaves, convection ovens, induction cooktops, Crock-Pot® and toaster ovens put more cooking heat where you need it.

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OFFICE CLOSED NOTICE

VVEC offices will be closed Wednesday, July 4th, in observation of Independence Day. Please call 918-371-2584 or 800-870-5948 if you need to report an outage.

SUMMER RESIDENTIAL RATES

April through September usage,
May through October billing

Customer Charge | \$30.00

Energy Charge

1st 2,000 kWh | \$.08272/kWh

Over 2,000 kWh | \$.08782/kWh

A power cost adjustment (PCA) will be applied to all bills when the actual cost of power purchased exceeds or is less than 59.87 mills per kWh.

In addition, a gross receipts tax of 2 percent of revenue will be included, plus additional taxes if applicable.

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✓ Pay online via SmartHub

Go to <https://vvec.smarthub.coop> to login and pay your account (free of charge).

✓ Pay in person

Cash, check and credit card payments can be made inside the VVEC office from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. The office is located at 8901 E. 146th Street North, Collinsville. A night deposit, located to the left of the office's front doors, is available for payments made after 4 p.m. and on weekends.

✓ Pay over the phone

Call 866-780-5458 and select option 4. You can make a secure payment using your Visa or MasterCard, or debit card. U.S. Payments charges a convenience fee of at least \$3.95 per credit/debit card transaction, and a \$2 fee for each electronic check transaction.

✓ Pay via automatic funds transfer

Have your electric bill payment automatically deducted from your bank account or charged to your credit card at the same time each month. This program is free of charge. Contact a consumer services representative at 918-371-2584 for more information.

✓ Pay at a PaySite™ Kiosk

A number of kiosks are located throughout VVEC's service territory. A kiosk in the lobby of the VVEC headquarters in Collinsville is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (no charge).

Costs affiliated with using the other kiosks range from \$2, if paying by cash or check, to \$3.95 per \$400 increment if paying by credit card. You will need your VVEC account number with you when using this payment method.

Pay As You Go Prepaid

As an alternative to regular billing, VVEC offers Pay As You Go Prepaid. It is available to new and existing members. You do not receive a paper bill when on Prepaid, but you can review your account history such as usage, charge and credit balance by signing in to SmartHub. Prepaid allows you to pay for your electric before it's used. You can now pay in advance according to your budget or for as much as you want to use.

As a Prepaid member, you will need to pay a \$25 membership, \$25 connect fee, \$25 deposit and \$50 credit for electricity, for a total minimum of \$125 to have your service activated. Prepaid electric service requires your account to have a credit balance at all times. You will receive low balance notifications by phone, text or email.

Benefits of Pay As You Go Prepaid include: members have more control over their energy use; Prepaid members typically use less energy than those on traditional billing; Prepaid helps members learn what habits increase and decrease usage; it helps members make informed decisions on when and how much energy to use; members can monitor real-time usage by signing in to SmartHub; Prepaid eliminates the unknown energy bill at the end of the month.

For more information about VVEC's Pay As You Go Prepaid program, please contact our Consumer Service Representatives at 918-371-2584.

PaySite™ Kiosk locations

Bartlesville

- Homeland - 811 S.E. Frank Phillips Blvd.
- Homeland - 915 S. Madison Blvd.

Catoosa

- Reasor's - 2500 N. Hwy. 66

Chelsea

- Harps - 300 E. Layton/HWY 66

Claremore

- 5-Eleven - 1699 N. Lynn Riggs Blvd.
- Reasor's - 1000 W. Will Rogers Blvd.

Collinsville

- Mo's Corner - 1502 W. Main St.
- VVEC office - 8901 E. 146th St. N.

Nowata

- Homeland - 813 E. Cherokee Ave.

Owasso

- Reasor's - 11815 E. 86th St. N.
- Sunny's Kwik Stop - 11700 E. 86th St. N.

Sand Springs

- Stop N Save - 6520 Charles Page Blvd.

Skiatook

- Mister Bass - 4000 W. Rogers Blvd.

Tulsa

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- Fiesta Mart - 8107 S. Mingo Rd.
- Fiesta Mart - 10711 E. 81st St.
- Fiesta Mart - 2738 E. 91st St.
- Joy Mart - 2112 S. Garnett Rd.
- Lucky Stop - 8106 E. 25th Pl.
- Sav-A-Lot - 4229 Southwest Blvd.
- Tulsa Trip - 4948 N. Peoria
- Warehouse Market - 301 S. Lewis

Additional locations available at
<http://paysitekiosklocator.com>

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will offer more comfort if used to circulate air through areas where you are most active. You'll get a wind chill effect that will make you feel just a little cooler.

Central air conditioning can use as much as one kwh of electricity for each 12 minute cycle of cooling. A ceiling fan can operate for about 13 hours on the same amount of electricity, while a floor or table fan, depending on size, might run for 10 hours per kwh of power. Turn off fans when you leave a room, because they cool people, not space.

Kitchen comfort

When it comes to heat and humidity, changing your kitchen activities presents a wellspring of opportunities to reduce your household energy demand throughout the day.

Your stove represents the modern hearth, and all the things that make the kitchen a favorite gathering place in winter can help send your electric meter into overdrive from late spring through early fall.

According to researchers at North Carolina State University, in Raleigh, cooking dinner for a family of four on an electric range releases about 20 ounces of water vapor into the air, and that amount can

triple with a gas range.

Appliances on your countertops or stashed in your pantry could keep you cooler and use less energy. Microwaves use about 60 percent as much energy as full-size ovens, and a toaster oven or induction cooker consumes about half as much power. Because they are generally designed to heat food more efficiently in less space, the surface areas available for heating are smaller, reducing waste heat surfaces and keeping kitchens cooler.

Share the space

In simpler times, families spent more time together in the same room even as they pursued different interests. Some members might read books or magazines under the light of shared lamp, while others watched television or played board games.

Today it's common for everyone to retreat to separate spaces, turn on their electronics, adjust their ceiling fans or window unit air conditioners and close their doors to cocoon in their own environments.

Getting control of your energy use to reduce your home's overall demand can be really challenging when you have to consider the entire home, so bring back family time to beat the peak.

LCD televisions generally use 60 percent as much electricity as comparably sized plasma models. One laptop computer uses about 20 percent as much power as a desktop computer and monitor. And today's home assistant devices can play music using about 17 percent of the energy on a component stereo system, or about as much power as the boom box you use on the beach.

A video game console consumes about 200 watts of power. One system pressed into service for spirited intramural competition between family members in one room uses about a third of the power of three players engaged in online games around the house.

Finish the space with energy-efficient LED fixtures for lighting, a couple sets of headphones and a few rechargeable power boosters for the family's handheld devices. You'll have a cool and fun place to spend a few hours with the family.

Derrill Holly writes on cooperative issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the Arlington, Va.-based service arm of the nation's 900-plus consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric cooperatives.

Easy One-Dish Chicken and Veggie Bake

Serves 4

- 1 pound chicken breast, cut in fourths
- 12 small red potatoes, quartered
- 12 ounces green beans
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tablespoon herbs de Provence
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper

Heat oven to 350°F. Place chicken, potatoes and green beans in rows in 13-by-9-inch baking dish with chicken in middle. Drizzle with olive oil and season with garlic, herbs de Provence, salt and pepper. Bake 50 minutes, or until chicken reaches internal temperature of 165°F and potatoes are tender.



Recipe and photo courtesy of produceforkids.com