

Why is my bill so high?

It's cold outside

We all know it's been cold, but this winter has been much colder than the last two years when we had unseasonably mild winters. According to data from the National Weather Service in Springfield, January 2014 tied for the third coldest January in the last 25 years and December 2013 was the fourth coldest in the last 25 years.

Heating

Space conditioning (heating/cooling) is your home's largest energy user. With the early and prolonged cold temperatures this winter, your heating system has been working overtime to keep the temperature in your home comfortable. When temperatures are below 30 degrees, heat pumps often can't keep up and automatically switch over to heat strips or emergency heat. This requires much more energy.

Staying at home

When it's cold and snowy, people spend more time at home and indoors than when the weather is moderate. When you're family is home, you're probably using appliances, electronics and even heating that you wouldn't otherwise, especially when kids are out of school for snow days.

Water heaters

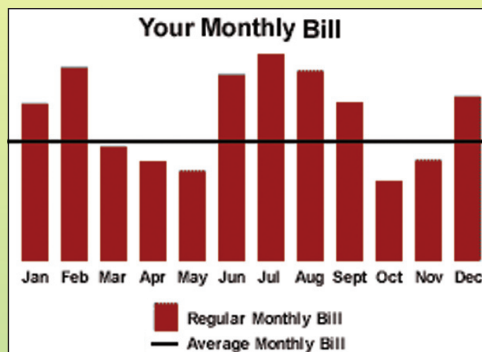
Water heaters can account for 17-25 percent of your home's energy use. When outdoor temps are low, water coming into your home's water heater is much lower and requires more energy to heat. People tend to take longer baths and showers in the winter, which also adds to your energy bill.

Water pipes

When temperatures are below freezing, many homeowners become concerned about water pipes freezing. Using heat lamps and space heaters for pipes can significantly increase energy usage. In January, low temperatures were below the freezing point 30 out of 31 days.

AVERAGE PAYMENT PLAN

Long-range forecasts indicate there is still plenty of cold weather in store this winter. To help smooth out the highs and lows in your energy bill caused by extreme weather, Empire has the Average Payment Plan (APP). With APP, there are no surprises when your energy bill arrives. Here's how it works – APP divides your expected annual usage into equal payments. At the end of the contract year, your monthly payment is adjusted based on your actual usage. Plus, when enrolling in APP, you can adjust your due date by up to seven days. To register, visit us at www.empiredistrict.com/customerservice and click on Billing and Payment Information.



Top Tips for Winter Energy Savings

Lower your thermostat

Set your thermostat as low as comfortable. For every degree you lower the setting, you can save about 3 percent on your heating bill. Consider lowering the setting 5 – 10 degrees if you're away from home during the day as well as at bedtime. Consider investing in a programmable thermostat to do this automatically.

Keep your filter clean

Change or clean your furnace filter. A dirty filter means your heating system has to work harder and use more energy.

Seal the leaks

Keep warm air inside by sealing leaks with caulking or weather stripping. Air leaks can account for up to 10 percent of your energy bill.

Let the sun shine in

On sunny days, open shades on south facing windows to allow the sun to warm and light your home. Be sure to close shades and drapes at night to keep out the chill.

Turn down water heater

Water heaters are often set to 140 degrees. Lower your setting to 115 – 120 degrees. You'll save energy, but still have plenty of hot water.

Unplug

Be sure to unplug or turn off electronics and appliances that aren't being actively used. Computers, TVs, chargers – if they're plugged in, they're using energy, even when they're not turned on.

Energy calculators

To analyze your energy use, perform energy-saving scenarios and find more ways to save, check out our Energy Calculators at www.empiredistrict.com/EnergySolutions/Calculators.

