

Vacation Conservation Tips Save Energy and Money While You're Away



Ever go on vacation and wonder why your utility bill remains unchanged? Just because you leave your house doesn't mean your power bill will go down while you're gone. Here are some recommendations to save energy and money while you're away:

Heating/Cooling If you'll be gone during the winter, set your thermostat to 50 degrees. Your home will be chilly when you return but not so cold the pipes will freeze or plants will be damaged. As a precaution, however, shut off the water at the meter and drain the faucets just in case there is a cold snap. If you'll be leaving during a mild time of year, consider turning off the thermostat. If you have portable heaters, remember to NEVER leave these plugged in, even if they are turned off.

Water Heater Water heaters are a simple target for vacation shutdown. They use a lot of energy just keeping the water in the tank hot. For gas water heaters, the simplest option is to switch the unit to "pilot." Electric water heaters either need to be turned off at the breaker switch or, if you don't want to turn it all the way off, electricity can still be saved by just setting the lowest temperature setting possible.

Washer and Dryer Unplug these appliances before leaving. They have been known to "short out" and cause fires when, because of a storm or accident, they become surrounded by water. Also, disconnect the hoses leading to the automatic washer to avoid freezing.

Appliances/Electronics Unplug before leaving. Television sets and entertainment systems still draw power when plugged in, even if they are turned off. Don't forget the small stuff too: lights, toasters, coffee pots, hair dryers, and kitchen stoves all drain power when plugged in. Make a circuit around your house before you leave and make sure to unplug anything that won't be in use.

Refrigerator The refrigerator is the largest user of electricity in both vacant and occupied homes. If you are able to completely empty the refrigerator and unplug it, you'll definitely notice the difference on your bill. Before switching it off, empty and clean the freezer, place a box of baking soda on the shelf and prop the door open. Mold and odors will result if the door remains closed. If you can't empty it entirely, turn the temperature up a few degrees.

Freezer Fully packed freezers usually cannot be emptied and de-iced to accommodate an absence. If you need to leave it switched on, have a neighbor check to make sure the power remains on and working. To avoid accidental shut-off, place a home freezer on its own circuit.



Over...

Water Turn off your water at the main valve. Drain faucets to avoid frozen pipes that could break and flood your home. Remember to turn your water heater off BEFORE you turn the water off at the main valve.

Vents Block vents on the windy side of house or where pipes are exposed. Leave open vents on south and west sides of house for ventilation.

Lights Leave off lights except for a few attached to a timer. The timer could also be used to switch a radio off and on as a possible theft deterrent. If you have exterior floodlights, hook up to a timer or motion sensor to limit the time they are left on.

Water Bed If you have a waterbed, this could easily be your biggest energy user. While it may not make sense to turn the bed off entirely due to slow heat-up time, compromise by turning the temperature down 10 degrees and adding a couple of extra quilts to hold in heat.

Hot Tub Turn down the thermostat when you are on vacation. If you will be gone for a week or more during warmer months, you can set it at its lowest level or turn off the heater. In freezing weather, some heating must be maintained to prevent freeze damage to the pipes and plumbing, unless the spa is winterized and water removed from the plumbing system.

