



Spring cleaning adds to energy savings



Spring is a great time to refresh, clean and enhance energy efficiency at home. By implementing simple yet effective energy-saving strategies during our spring cleaning routines, we can create an efficient living environment that may also lower our utility bills and extend the life of our appliances.

To cut your energy costs by getting better performance from your appliances, exhaust fans and lights, we suggest these tips.

- More than likely, you clean your lint trap after every load. However, do not forget to take the extra step and clean the dryer vent at least annually. Access the vent opening from outside your home and use a dryer vent cleaning brush or vacuum to thoroughly remove lint from the entire vent length. This is also a good time to check for any tears or holes in your vent hose that may impede airflow. Make sure to unplug your dryer before tackling this task.
- Whether it is a bathroom fan or kitchen fan, they all collect a lot of dust and grime. Make sure to keep the fans clean. A clean fan operates more efficiently, meaning it can achieve higher speeds without having to work harder.
- The most crucial step in making your fridge more energy efficient is to regularly clean the condenser coils on the back or bottom of the fridge by using a vacuum. Wipe the floor down around the coils to

prevent more dust buildup. Inspect the door seals for any gaps or damage and clean them with a damp cloth.

- Check the filter in your HVAC system. Your furnace worked hard during the winter months. Ensuring your system has a clean filter is a low-cost and easy way to protect your system and maximize efficiency.
- Do not forget about your air-conditioning units. They can be cleaned with the proper tools and cleaning agents. Make sure outdoor condenser coils are cleaned with a garden hose, ensuring to remove debris like leaves and grass clippings. For indoor units, clean the evaporator coils with a coil cleaning solution and a soft brush. Regularly change air filters that trap dust and allergens.
- While you are dusting your TV, computer and other home electronics, look at how they are plugged in. You can stop overpaying to power these big users by plugging them into an advanced power strip, which automatically cuts electricity to any idle equipment you choose.
- Quality LED bulbs use about 80% less energy for lighting and they last three to five times longer than incandescent bulbs. An LED bulb can last for 25,000 to 50,000 hours, compared to an incandescent bulb, which usually lasts around 1,000 hours.
- Clean ovens heat more evenly and quickly, providing better results and lower energy usage. Consider using the steam cleaning function for light cleaning if available, as it is more energy efficient than the self-clean cycle, which uses higher temperatures.
- While cleaning windows, which will allow the maximum amount of sunlight to pass through, check the seals and locks to ensure they close tightly. Check for leaks that may need caulking. This will contribute to year-round comfort in your home.

Electricity use in the United States is expected to rise to record highs over the next two years, with the demand for electricity expected to at least double by 2050. Spring is the ideal time to declutter, deep clean and implement practices that not only tidy our homes, but also reduce energy consumption. ■

Stay safe around electricity


Some safety hazards are easy to detect. You can see, smell or hear them: a wrinkled rug that could cause a fall, spoiled food with an unpleasant odor, icy pavement or a weather siren warning of a tornado.

Electrical hazards, however, are often more difficult to notice. While some issues, such as warm outlets, flickering lights or burning odors, may alert you to a problem, many electrical dangers remain invisible and silent.


Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative (LYREC) wants you to stay safe in your home by following important electrical safety tips.

- **Avoid charging phones in your bed while sleeping.** This practice can cause burns or even ignite bedding, posing a serious fire hazard.
- **Use certified chargers only.** Always use the original chargers provided with your devices. Generic, inexpensive chargers may save money upfront, but could be defective, leading to injuries or fires.
- **Keep charging devices away from water.** Never use a plugged-in device near water. If a charging phone falls into water, such as a bathtub, it can result in electrocution or death.
- **Every month, test the ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs), which help prevent electrical shocks.** Test your GFCI outlets every month to ensure they are functioning properly. Mark your calendar as a reminder.


- **Address unusual electrical symptoms.** Pay attention to frequently flickering lights, warm outlets or unexplained odors. These could indicate electrical issues. Call a licensed electrician to inspect your home's wiring.
- **Do not overload outlets or circuits.** Avoid plugging too many devices into one outlet or circuit. Overloading can damage electronics, your home's wiring or even cause a fire. While breakers and fuses are designed to prevent overloading, they are not foolproof.
- **Childproof your home.** Homes built before 2008 may lack tamper-resistant outlets required by the National Electric Code. Use outlet covers or plastic plugs to prevent children from inserting objects into outlets.
For more tips and resources on electrical safety, visit www.lyrec.com. ■

TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS


Be cautious of fraudulent websites pretending to be an electric utility. Scammers often create look-alike sites to steal your personal or payment information. Always type your utility's official web address directly into your browser instead of clicking email or text links. Watch for signs of a secure website, such as "https:///" in the address bar and a padlock icon. If you're ever unsure, call your utility company using the official phone number listed on your bill to verify payment or account details. Stay vigilant to protect yourself from utility fraud.



STAY IN THE KNOW



Stay connected by keeping your contact information up to date. Current contact information benefits you in multiple ways.

- ✓ Faster outage reporting and response
- ✓ Timely alerts about planned outages and other important updates
- ✓ Smoother customer service interactions
- ✓ Improved access to member benefits and programs

Ensure your phone number, email address and mailing address are up to date so you can enjoy the benefits of staying connected.



5 ways to use smart plugs

Whether you're a smart device expert or a home automation newbie, smart plugs are a great addition to make your home more efficient.

A smart plug connects the plug to an app on your phone via Wi-Fi. The smart plug can then turn an appliance into a fully automated device you can control from your phone or with your voice.

Smart plugs don't cost much and they're easy to install. Just plug them into an outlet and you're ready to go. Regardless of how you intend to use your smart plug, investing in this helpful technology is a wise move.

Check out these creative ways you can use smart plugs around the house to save money and make your life easier.

1. Charge multiple types of devices

Whether you have a two-prong, three-prong or USB plug at the end of a cord, smart plugs can handle them all. Smart plugs come in a variety of shapes and sizes, some ideal for space-saving situations and others fully equipped to handle a variety of appliances and devices.

2. Pinpoint energy-wasting appliances

Want to know exactly how much it costs to run your

appliances and devices? Smart plugs can track how much electricity your appliances use, helping you determine if it's time to upgrade to a more efficient model.

3. Connect with other smart devices

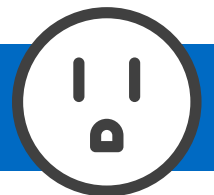
You can get the most out of your smart plug and control your devices from anywhere by connecting it with a smartphone app or a voice assistant like Amazon's Alexa, Apple HomeKit or Google Assistant.

4. Keep your home safe

Smart plugs can reduce the chance of electrical fires by automatically switching off appliances like space heaters and electric blankets. To ward off burglars, you can set timers for lights near windows to make it seem like your home is occupied when you're away.

5. Make holidays more jolly

Plug your festive light displays into a smart plug, so you can create a schedule and have them turn on and off at set times. Or, make Halloween a little spookier by turning lamps on and off through a connected smartphone app. ■





During Co-op Day at the Capitol, Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative staff and directors gathered at the Montana State Capitol in January and served over 200 sack lunches to legislators.



Meet **Katie Jochim**, Lower Yellowstone Rural Electric Cooperative's new customer service representative and billing coordinator. She will be stepping into Margo Zadow's role after Zadow retires. Jochim is from Flasher and has two younger brothers. Before joining us, she worked at Stockman Bank. In her free time, she enjoys spending time with family and friends.



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