

GVEA's Biggest Loser Challenge

The Biggest Loser Wins

It's hardly news that energy costs are rising. It's happening across the nation and especially here in Alaska where we have a high dependence on fuel.

The cost of home heating fuel has skyrocketed and prices at the gas pump continue to rise. Your co-op is greatly affected as well since we rely heavily on oil for local power generation.

The result: higher energy bills, including your electric bill. Sometimes the effects of all this can seem overwhelming. What can you do? Actually, quite a bit.

Trim Your Bill

By shedding unwanted kilowatt-hours, you can lower your usage. Make some relatively simple changes and see how much you can lower your usage.

For example, do you know how many light bulbs you have in your home? How many have you changed to compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs)?

CFLs provide the same amount of light but use 75 percent less electricity. They cost more up front, but they save you money every month on your electric bill and they last 10 times longer than incandescent bulbs.

Assume you have five light fixtures in use an average of four hours a day. You replace each 60-watt incandescent bulb with a 15-watt CFL. You save 27 kilowatt-hours a month. That equates to \$4.59 per month.

Some energy saving efforts don't require a trip to the hardware store, but simply a change of behavior. Here are two examples to start with today:

- Turn off your computers when they're not in use and especially overnight
- Use the "no heat" cycle on your dishwasher and air dry dishes

The Challenge

GVEA's Biggest Loser Challenge starts with your electric bill. The *Usage in KWH* chart gives you some good information about your usage patterns.

The chart provides 13 months of your usage history. Compare the current month to the same month of the previous year. Our focus here is the *Avg. kWh* line. This represents the daily average usage that month.

Challenge your family to lower the daily average number of kilowatt-hours you use. Start now to see how much you can decrease your kWh us-



age by the time you receive your next bill. How does your May 2008 daily average compare to your May 2007 one? Keep watching your bills as you implement energy saving ideas.

Check out our *Room-By-Room Energy Saving Checklist* to see how many tips you can incorporate. Involve your whole family and watch the unwanted kilowatt-hours melt away.

Room-By-Room Energy Saving Checklist

Use this checklist to learn simple ways to save big. Even those whose budgets are stretched too tightly already can implement several of these changes.

Challenge yourself. See how many of these no-cost or low-cost options you can implement this month. Then make a plan and a budget for some of the more time and labor intensive energy efficiency upgrades.

In every room

Lighting

- Change incandescent light bulbs to compact fluorescent lamps
- Use only CFLs designated dimmable in dimmable fixtures
- Use occupancy sensors and timers
- Replace several small bulbs with one large bulb
- Decorate wall surfaces with light, reflective colors
- Keep fixtures and covers clean

Phantom appliances

- Unplug when not in use and especially when you're on vacation

Computers

- Put all electronics on one power strip; turn off when not in use
- Turn off your computers overnight

Electric heaters

- One 1,200-watt electric heater costs 20¢ per hour to run
- If you must use electric heaters, do so sparingly; costs add up quickly.

Kitchen

Electric range

- Fit pans to burner size
- Use lids on pans to retain heat
- Use small appliances like crock pot or microwave
- Pre-heat oven only five minutes

Dishwasher

- Wash full loads
- Wash with energy-saver cycle
- Dry with "no heat" cycle

Refrigerator

- Keep 3/4 to 7/8 full for efficiency
- Set refrigerator temperature at +34° to +38° / Freezer 0° to +5°
- Clean coils every three months
- Locate away from heat sources
- Replace with Energy Star model

Bedroom

Heated water bed

- Place 1½" to 2" foam pad on top
- Cover with heavy quilt
- Insulate sides and bottom

Bathroom

- Install low-flow fixtures
- Repair leaky faucets promptly
- Showers use 50 percent less water than baths

Utility Room

Electric water heater or storage tank

- Set water heater to 120° to 130°F
- Wrap water heater and pipes
- Flush sediment regularly
- Install a timer
- Use tempering tank

Electric dryer

- Dry full loads
- Do multiple loads at a time
- Clean lint screen
- Choose moisture sensor model
- Air dry when possible

Washing machine

- Wash with cold water
- Pre-soak heavily soiled loads

Freezer

- Defrost whenever 1/4" build up
- Set thermostat 0° to +5°F

Major appliances

- Maintain your appliances, especially your furnace or boiler. Well maintained appliances operate more efficiently.
- Replace aging appliances with Energy Star models

Exterior

Yard light

- Use high pressure sodium bulbs
- Install photocell motion detectors

Primary headbolt

- Well-maintained vehicles need only two to three hours of preheating
- Install a timer or switched outlet
- Match heater to vehicle size

Heat tape

- Reduce wattage if cold water initially comes out warm

Beyond electricity

- Insulate and weatherize your home
- Install a setback thermostat
- Block drafts with foam gaskets on exterior wall outlets and switches
- Consider purchasing a more fuel efficient vehicle

Additional resources:

- Cold Climate Housing Research Center (907) 457-3454
www.cchrc.org
- Alaska Cooperative Extension Service (907) 474-7201
www.alaska.edu/uaf/ces

