From the Agent

I can’t believe that it is already November. Holidays are just around the corner. It is a time to share delicious food with cherished company and deck the halls with holiday lights. Do you think you are spending too much on electricity? Don’t let holiday energy bills ruin your party. In this month’s WET, I will present several simple tips that you can control your holiday energy bills and still enjoy celebrations in your home. I hope you find the information helpful. Thanks for reading WET. You can also find more updated information on water and energy from the WET Facebook page (www.facebook.com/marionwet). Last but not the least, WET photo contest is waiting for your submission. Any photo that features a Marion County water theme (good or bad) is welcomed. Please visit WET Facebook page for more information.

Yilin Zhuang

The average annual energy cost of a home is about $2,200 and approximately 13% of it goes to operating your refrigerator, dishwasher, clothes washer and dryer.

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Kitchen Tips for an Energy-Wise Holiday

New kitchen appliances use nearly 50 percent less energy than those built ten years ago. You may have the ENERGY STAR appliances in your home. Still, when holiday time rolls around, your energy bills can rise considerably with your stove, oven, dishwasher running overtime, and refrigerator standing open. However, it is not difficult to keep added holiday energy cost to a minimum if you follow these tips.

♦ Oven Tips
Don’t open the oven door to take a peek at the food inside. Instead, turn on the oven light and check the cooking status through the oven window. Every time you open the oven door, you lose 20 to 50 degrees. As long as your oven is on, cook several items at the same time. Make sure you leave enough room for the heat to circulate around each pan or plate. Glass or ceramic baking dishes can lower the baking temperature 25 degrees since they retain heat better than others.

♦ Stovetop Tips
When cooking on top of your range, match the size of the pan to the heating element. More heat will get to the pan and less will be lost to the surrounding air. Believe it or not, a six-inch pan on an eight-inch burner will waste more than 40 percent of the energy. Clean burners and reflectors also provide better heating, while saving energy.

ENERGY STAR® is a name of a joint program of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) that aims to assist in money savings and environmental protection by promoting energy efficient products and practices.
**Refrigerator Tips**
Help your refrigerator and freezer operate efficiently and economically by keeping the doors closed as much as possible so the cold air doesn't escape. However, leaving the door open for a longer period of time while you take out the items you need is more efficient than opening and closing it several times. It’s easy to keep your refrigerator and freezer full at Thanksgiving. It’s also energy efficient, because the mass of cold items inside will help your refrigerator recover each time the door is opened. Don’t cram it so full, however, that cool air can’t circulate properly around your food.

**Dishwasher Tips**
One simple, fun, and cost-effective way to save energy at holiday time is to gather everyone together in the kitchen and wash and dry your dishes by hand. But don’t keep a steady stream of hot water flowing, or you’ll waste more energy than you’ll save. A load of dishes cleaned in a dishwasher requires 37 percent less water than washing dishes by hand. However, if you fill the wash and rinse basins instead of letting the water run, you’ll use half as much water as a dishwasher. If you opt to use the dishwasher, wash full loads only. If you must rinse your dishes before loading them, use only cold water so you’re not running up your energy bill by heating water unnecessarily. Don’t forget to use the energy-saving cycles whenever possible. Dishwashers that feature air power or overnight dry settings can save up to 10 percent of your dishwashing energy costs.

Saving energy in the kitchen is a habit you should practice all year long - why not begin this Thanksgiving? Throughout the holiday season and into the New Year, you’ll watch your energy bills drop even as you use less of our precious energy resources - just one more thing to be thankful for this holiday season. Above information is an excerpt from Consumer Energy Center of California Energy Commission.
Lighting Tips for an Energy-Wise Holiday

With holidays almost upon us and home decorating to do, costs and energy savings should be on the brain. Before you start stringing these lights, take a few minutes to read these energy-efficient holiday decorating tips.

♦ Buy LED Lights
Those old incandescent holiday lights are terribly inefficient, and despite careful storage, often emerge only halfway lit with many being tossed in landfills. Instead, save a bundle by replacing them with ENERGY STAR® qualified LED light strands. In addition to using 70% less energy than traditional bulbs, they are brighter, eco-friendly, and are safer, as they are much cooler than incandescent lights. They also (a) are easier to install—up to 24 strings of LEDs can be connected end-to-end without overloading a wall socket, (b) can last ten times longer, and (c) have no filaments or glass to break. If you prefer white lights with the look of incandescent lights, look for “warm” white on the label. LED holiday bulbs are now available in many colors.

♦ Read Labels
When you shop for these LED lights, don’t forget that safety should play an important role in your holiday decorating. Here are a few suggestions: (a) make sure all lights you purchase contain the UL label, which means they meet Underwriters Laboratories safety requirements; (b)
be sure you're buying the right set for indoor use, outdoor use, or both; (c) check all light sets for frayed wires, damaged sockets, or cracked insulation before decorating; (d) all outdoor cords, plugs and sockets must be weatherproof. Keep electrical connections off the ground, and make sure wiring is kept clear of drainpipes and railings to prevent any risk of shock. It's also a good idea to use a ground fault circuit interrupter on each circuit. If current leaks through frayed or damaged wires, the interrupter will shut off the lights; and (e) don't overload your electrical circuits.

♦ **Rebates**
Switching to LED light strings may cost a bit more up front, but it can save you money in the long run. Not only do LED light strings cost significantly less to operate, they can also last up to 40 holiday seasons. Also, find local rebates and coupons on ENERGY STAR® qualified decorative light strings.

♦ **Limit Hourly Usage**
Set timers for lights to automatically turn on when it gets dark and off in the middle of the night, depending on your preferences. You can save a bundle keeping light displays on only 8 hours of the evening (when you can see them). If you are still using traditional incandescent bulbs, this tip is even more important to cut down on energy costs.

♦ **Creative and Reflective Decorating**
Not everything is about strands of lights. Reflective ornaments and tinsel are just as bright at night, so getting creative with your lighting display can multiply your resources for shine. You could even mirror your next door neighbors' frighteningly costly display with a string of silver bells on your railing. If you're in the mood for a holiday that's old-fashioned and more energy efficient, consider decorating this year's tree with edible ornaments, like gingerbread men, candy canes, and strings of popcorn and cranberries. But stay away from burning candles on or around your tree. Although they may provide a soft, flickering light, they're a definite fire hazard, and aromatic candles have been known to cause indoor air quality problems.

Keep energy efficient in mind and it is a gift you can enjoy all year long. Above information is an excerpt from U.S. Department of Energy.