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Energy-saving tips



For apartments and condos



In this guide


- 5 Heating
- 6 Water heating
- 7 Insulation
- 8 Air leaks
- 10 Lighting and appliances
- 11 Multifamily property owners

About Puget Sound Energy

Puget Sound Energy is Washington state's oldest local energy company. We serve 1.1 million electric customers and more than 760,000 natural gas customers in 10 counties. For more information, visit pse.com. Also follow us on **Facebook** and **Twitter**.



Whether you rent or own, there are many different opportunities to save energy. These recommendations will help you target your energy saving efforts. The first step in managing your energy costs is to identify the no-cost, low-cost actions you can take to reduce the energy use in your home. Apartments and condominiums vary widely in terms of size, age, condition, insulation values, location, heating system type and efficiency, so these energy saving ideas will have varying results. The greatest energy savings usually comes from choosing an energy-efficient building. Before you purchase or lease a unit, if possible, select a building constructed after 1980 or an older building that has been upgraded with added insulation and double-glazed, vinyl frame, replacement windows.



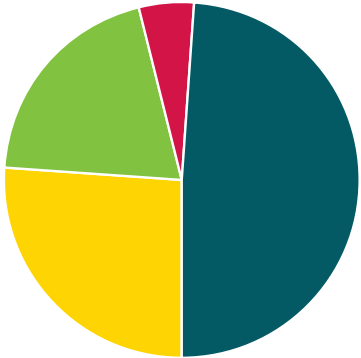
Tip

Important

If you are a renter, be sure to contact your property manager before making any changes to your unit.

Typical multifamily property energy use

This diagram represents a typical breakdown of energy use by multifamily properties.




- 5% Fridge
- 20% Water heating
- 49% Heating and cooling
- 26% Lighting and appliances

Heating

To save money on heating bills, take a look at how your heating system is used: when it operates, how it's maintained and how much space in your home is heated. Check for gaps and holes that allow heat to escape, raising your heating bills and making your home drafty and less comfortable.

- Create a “warm room”: when possible, only heat the part of the house that you spend the most time in.
- Have your heating system inspected regularly by a professional to ensure it's not only operating efficiently, but safely, too.
- Turn the heat down or off while you're asleep or away from home. Install and properly set a programmable thermostat to make this happen automatically.
- Seal 'em if you got 'em: If your home has heating ducts and they go through an unheated basement, attic or crawl space, check for leaky joints or disconnected sections. Seal leaky joints with latex duct mastic or foil-backed butyl tape available from heating equipment suppliers. Reconnect loose duct sections.



Caution

When using a portable heater, plug the heater directly into an outlet, not to an extension cord. Make sure the outlet and wiring are in good condition, and the circuit is adequate for the heater (most require a 15 amp circuit). Keep the area around the heater clear of furniture and combustibles. If you have young children, elderly people, or pets in your household, take special care to avoid tripping or burns.

Water heating

Water heating is typically a large consumer of energy in the home. The amount of hot water used monthly, and the size of the bill, can vary greatly with the number of people in the household, their ages, and lifestyles.

- Set water heater thermostat to 125° F or the “low” setting to save money and reduce risk of scalding.
- If your water heater is leaking, replace it.
- If the pressure/temperature relief valve is leaking, it should be replaced.
- When shopping for a new or replacement water heater, the high-efficiency models can be found by looking for the lowest operating cost shown on the yellow Energy Guide label affixed to each model. Also, look for ENERGY STAR® qualified models or those with higher Energy Factor ratings.

Plumbing fixtures

- Check hot water faucets or shower valves for leaks. Replace washers or repair valves if you find leaks.
- Install energy efficient showerheads and faucet aerators.

Hot water pipes

- Check hot water pipes in the crawl space or basement for leaks. Repair if needed.
- Install inexpensive pipe insulation on all exposed hot water pipes and on the first three feet of exposed cold water pipe that is connected to the water heater.

Hot water consumption

- Take shorter showers instead of baths.
- Run hot water only when needed.
- Use the dishwasher rather than hand-washing dishes and don't pre-rinse dishes.
- When doing laundry, use cold water.
- Avoid underloading or overloading dishwashers and clothes washers.

Pay attention to moisture levels

Some apartments and condominiums have high indoor humidity levels due to poor ventilation, concrete slab floors, inadequate vapor barriers installed in crawl spaces, or very damp and shady locations. During winter, excess humidity may contribute to mold and mildew growth in rooms receiving little heat. On dry, sunny days, turn off the heat and open windows to dry problem rooms. If this doesn't work, heat the problem rooms just enough to discourage mold and mildew growth.

Insulation

Insulation levels in walls, ceilings and floors of your residence play a major role in determining annual heating costs and comfort. The amount of insulation in ceilings, walls and floors is often determined by the building or energy code requirements mandated at the time your building was constructed. Unless insulation has been added at a later date, many older buildings are under-insulated.

If your building was built before 1980, chances are there's some room for improvement in the insulation department.

Improving insulation

- Hot air rises, so make sure there is at least 12 to 18 inches of insulation in your attic ceiling.
- Insulate around crawl space hatches and gaskets.
- Wall insulation can be expensive, but it yields high savings.
- Ensure that your duct system is properly insulated if it runs outside of the conditioned space to a central heating system.

Multi-task and insulate

Add insulation when upgrading other parts of your home to save time and money.

Air leaks

Keeping warm air inside your home cuts down heating costs and makes your home more comfortable. Sealing air leaks also reduces the amount of dust and pollen entering the home when the weather is warm. Usually, sealing air leaks is an inexpensive, do-it-yourself job. However, if you live in a rental unit, be sure you get permission from the owner before making repairs or improvements to your unit.

Reducing leaks around windows, doors and chimneys

- Repair broken windows.
- On little-used operable windows and sliding doors, use non-hardening “rope caulk” to temporarily seal gaps while assuring that windows and doors can still be opened for emergencies.
- Choose thicker drapes or curtains and thermal window covers.
- If windows are single-paned, install “tape-up” interior storm windows or plastic shrink film as a low-cost, temporary fix.
- Use inexpensive weather stripping and door sweeps to reduce air leaks around entry doors. For a no-cost fix, roll up a bath towel and hold it against the bottom of the door with a weight.
- Weather strip or temporarily seal access doors between heated rooms and large, unheated spaces.
- Keep dampers closed when the fireplace is not in use, or add tight-fitting glass doors or a metal cover to seal the fireplace opening. If the fireplace is metal, consult the manufacturer for an approved (safe) glass door installation. If natural gas logs are installed, the damper must remain open at all times.

Reducing leaks from ceilings, floors and walls

- Fill, patch or caulk holes in floors and ceilings that allow warm air to leak into unheated spaces. Don't forget to check closets and crawl spaces.
- Fill, patch or caulk holes in walls. Check under sinks and around plumbing pipes for gaps.
- Weather strip or temporarily seal access doors or hatches to unheated upper floors or attics.
- Do NOT seal around surfaces that get hot, such as chimneys or vent pipes.



Tip

Important

If you have a lot of areas to be sealed, consult a professional to avoid creating a health or safety hazard. Do not seal outside-air supply openings such as foundation vents, wall vents and combustion air intakes.



Lighting and appliances

Lighting and appliances account for over a quarter of your household energy consumption. Whenever possible choose ENERGY STAR® qualified products to help reduce energy bills and improve comfort.

Replace incandescent lighting with energy-efficient light bulbs

- ENERGY STAR qualified LEDs (Light Emitting Diode) and CFLs (compact fluorescent lamps) use up to 75 percent less energy while lasting 10 times longer. In areas you occupy most this can mean big savings.
- Choose the right bulb for each room. CFL and LED bulbs come in a variety of shapes and sizes to suit nearly every household fixture. If you have dimmable fixtures in your household, be sure the CFL is compatible and has dimming capabilities.
- Use timers, photo cells and motion sensors to reduce the operating hours of interior or exterior lights left on for security purposes.

Using appliances efficiently

- Avoid underloading or overloading dishwashers or clothes washers.
- Avoid over-drying laundry. If your dryer has a moisture sensor or auto shut-off feature, use it.
- Clean the lint filter in your dryer every time you use it. A clogged filter increases drying time.
- If you have an older refrigerator or freezer, listen to see if the motor/compressor runs constantly. If so, you may need repair service to check for low refrigerant. Another cause may be a leaky door gasket.
- When cooking, match pots and pans to the right-sized burner. Use a microwave or toaster oven, rather than your stove, to heat food whenever possible.

ENERGY STAR® qualified appliances

Purchase ENERGY STAR qualified appliances and electronics and program them correctly to ensure they're running as efficiently as possible.



Multifamily property owners

To learn how your building can qualify for PSE's multifamily retrofit incentives contact a PSE representative at **1-866-997-9767** or **multifamilyretrofit@pse.com**

Incentives apply to all existing multifamily properties with five or more attached units located in PSE's service area. An energy audit must be performed by a PSE representative to qualify, and an authorized agreement must be in place prior to installation of measures.

Incentives and measures may change during the year; always refer to our website for the latest offerings:

pse.com/multifamilyretrofit

Renters

Puget Sound Energy offers multifamily property owners rebates on many energy-efficient products for your home. If you are a renter, first obtain permission from your landlord before making any changes within your apartment.



PSE customer Mary Roberts — King County