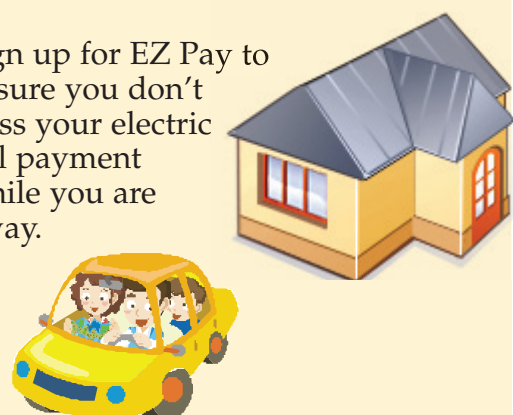


Make saving energy a part of your vacation plan

Besides thinking about what you're taking with you on vacation, think about what you're leaving behind. Use these tips to save energy and add convenience while you're away.

- Turn off the breaker to the water heater.
- Set your air conditioning thermostat to 85°.
- If you have a hot tub or spa, turn the heater off, and consider reducing filtering time (consult your hot tub maintenance company to be sure this won't damage your system).
- Turn off lights. Operate a few strategically placed lamps with a timer to give the illusion that someone is home. Equip those lamps with compact fluorescent bulbs.
- Turn off or unplug small appliances and electronics. Leave on a radio to deter prowlers.
- Call WH Security at 763-477-3000 the month before you leave, for a free on-site consultation.
- Sign up for EZ Pay to ensure you don't miss your electric bill payment while you are away.



Energy-saving competition enlightens contestants

When The Littlest User Contest concluded on July 31, Wright-Hennepin's (WH) Watt Watchers walked away with a landslide victory and a considerable amount of energy-saving knowledge.

The Watt Watcher team reduced their combined energy use by 43.27 percent by the end of the competition. A 43 percent reduction translates into a savings of about \$45 on an average monthly WH electric bill, which is estimated at about 1,000 kWh of use. The Lefevre family of Maple Grove, Minn. walked away with the individual household victory – and a free month of electricity – by reducing their use more than any other family in the competition with an over-all reduction of 58.13 percent.



The Lefevre family of Maple Grove, Minn. walked away with The Littlest User title and a free month of electricity. The family reduced their energy use by 58 percent throughout the competition.

The Littlest User Contest was designed to educate WH members and the members of Lake Region Electric Cooperative, located in Pelican Rapids, Minn., about electricity usage and energy conservation while having some fun throughout the learning process. The contest was designed to see which cooperative's team could reduce its energy use the most in a four-month period.

As a result of the contest, most of the participants said that they were unlikely to return to their previous energy-wasting ways.

"I was surprised to find out how easy it was to cut back on our use," said contestant Steve Walstad of Buffalo, Minn. "It just shows how wasteful we were being before the contest."

The Walstad's have cut their electric bill in half by reducing their energy use by 53.16 percent.

The households that participated in the contest tracked their daily energy-conserving efforts

by using MyMeter. MyMeter is an energy-use monitoring web portal that allows its users to view daily and monthly energy use data in a simple graphic format. This allows the participants, as well as other members in both cooperatives, to view how changes they've made around their homes directly affect their energy use.

Most of the families commented that MyMeter was a helpful tool to use throughout the contest.

Some families found that the contest made a great educational tool for teaching their kids about conservation.

"It's a great opportunity to explain conservation to your kids," said Jeff Bry, of Maple Grove, Minn. "This contest is helping them develop good habits."

The Bry family reduced their use by 37.77 percent.

Many of the participating families also found that their kids were more competitive during the contest than the adults were.

"Kaden will turn off the lights regardless if someone's using them or not," said Shawnee Lefevre.

The Dorvinen family of Otsego, Minn. even got used to limboing under clothes that were hung on their door frames to dry. This was the family's "pre-clothesline" season alternative to using the dryer.

"You have to army crawl to get into our rooms," said Adam Dorvinen.

Their efforts paid off, as the family reduced its use by 34.64 percent.

Most of the families also commented that conserving electricity brought them closer together. TV and computer use were often replaced with playing board games and spending more time outdoors.

"We always knew that we were big on board games," said Shannon Bry. "Since the contest started, we've been playing them a lot more."

What the participating families found to be the most enlightening about the contest is how easy it was to cut back on their energy use.

"I do a lot of little things that the rest of the family probably doesn't even notice," said Lisa Zipp, of St. Michael, Minn. "I wait until my hair is half dry before I blow dry it and adjust the thermostat during the day to reduce our heating and cooling costs. It all adds up."

For the Zipp's, these small changes added up to reducing their use by 20.70 percent.

According to Ted Pribyl of Maple Lake, Minn., most of his household's energy reduction was accomplished by using less artificial light.

"I like a lot of light," said Ted. "Before the contest we had 300-watt light bulbs in the garage. Those have now all been replaced with CFLs (compact fluorescent light bulbs)."

Ted also said that he tried to take advantage of daylight and was more conscious about whether or not he needed to turn on lights.

By doing these simple things, the Pribyls cut down their energy use by 25.69 percent.

As the contestants got deeper into the competition, they realized that it would be a challenge to go back to their previous energy use.

"Since the competition started, we've noticed when other houses have an unnecessary amount of lights on," said Jeff Bry. "It just seems wasteful."

The contestants also commented on the savings they noticed on their monthly electric bills. The Walstad family said that they were able to cut their bill virtually in half with the help of the friendly competition.

"It was harder at first," said Shawnee. "But now it's really become a habit."

And this habit is one that most of these contestants said they are unlikely to break. **WH**

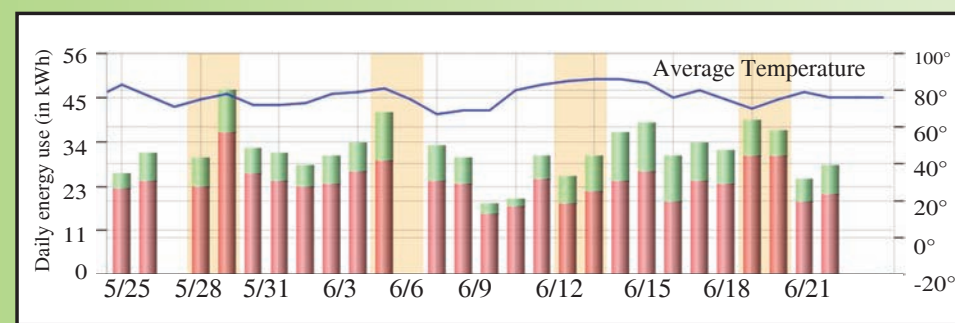


Even the youngest member of the Walstad family, Caden, is mindful of his family's energy use.



Ty Dorvinen is demonstrating the "army crawl" technique that he and his brothers have been using to limbo under their air-drying clothes. Prior to the contest, the family used their dryer for all of their laundry needs.

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The Watt Watchers included the Lefevre family of Maple Grove, Minn.; the Walstad family of Buffalo, Minn.; the Pribyl family of Maple Lake, Minn.; the Zipp family of St. Michael, Minn.; the Bry family of Maple Grove, Minn. and the Dorvinen family of Otsego, Minn.