



ENERGY EFFICIENCY

SCOTT'S ENERGY SPOT: SPACE HEATERS

Efficiency tips from Firelands Electric's energy advisor



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It's that time of year again... There is a nip in the air, and everyone has settled in for another north-central Ohio winter. Besides snow, ice, wind, and frigid temperatures, another issue that goes hand-in-hand with colder weather is higher energy bills. For starters, everyone spends more time indoors, so we tend to use more electricity for lighting, cooking, and entertainment. The biggest offender, though, is the increased need to heat your living space — which accounts

for the largest chunk of your monthly energy bills. And this number can skyrocket if you turn to electric space heaters to warm a room, or several rooms, in your home.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration's 2020 survey of residential energy use, 42% of the average member's monthly energy use is due to space heating. Unfortunately, a lot of unscrupulous companies will attempt to take advantage of this high percentage by offering products or services claiming to heat your home for "pennies per hour."

These products will adequately heat areas of your home, but at the cost of MANY pennies per hour. A 1,500-watt heater

(standard for the industry) running on high at the cooperative's competitive electric rate of \$0.12870/kilowatt-hour costs our members \$0.193 cents per hour, per heater to operate. At first glance, that doesn't sound too bad. The average heater runs about eight hours per day in the colder months, which comes out to \$1.54 per day. Still doable, one might say. But, \$1.54 per day for 30 days — that adds 360 kWh and \$46.20 to your monthly bill for every heater! Whew!

The average Firelands Electric residential member uses 1,188 kWh per month. So, one space heater running in the corner would consume almost one-third of their overall kWh PER MONTH. And that is only using one heater for eight hours a day.

"But Scott," you say, "I was told this nice heater with a custom wood finish would only cost pennies per day to heat my home." Truth be told, almost all electric space heaters require the identical amount of electricity to generate the same amount of heat. A phrase this grizzled old energy advisor often uses when comparing one electric space heater to another is "A watt is a watt." It doesn't matter if the electric heater being used is Amish or a \$20 milk house heater from a big box store. The cost to operate them is exactly the same.

With all of that being said, these heaters do have their place in a member's home, if needed. If you only spend time in one to two rooms of your home for most of the day, depending on these portable heaters as a main source of heat can work well to keep you comfortable. If you need to heat several rooms, or will need several heaters to do the job, it's best to consider other long-term — and more economical — alternatives. And if you need help deciding what is best for your home and your situation, call your co-op. Our call center will be happy to put you in touch with me so that I can help you get the most out of your energy dollars.