

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY

# SCOTT'S ENERGY SPOT: WATER HEATER SAVINGS

Efficiency tips from Firelands Electric's energy advisor



Scott Carbary  
ENERGY ADVISOR

As your cooperative's energy advisor, one of the most common questions I get asked is "What are some quick, easy, and cheap improvements I can do myself that will yield noticeable results?"

Upgrades made to one of the three largest energy users in your home will create the biggest savings. Heating and cooling systems make up the top two users. Combined,

they account for 50% to 52% of a home's total energy consumption, according to the US Energy Information Administration.

Water heating is the third system on this large energy user list, at 20% to 30% of your total consumption. Let's take a look at some tips that members can use to reduce the impact of water heating on their energy bills:

1. If your water heater is more than seven or eight years old, consider wrapping the tank with one of the insulating blankets available at most big-box DIY stores. As reported by the Department of Energy, this \$40 to \$50 investment can result in savings of 7% to 16% of your tank's energy consumption.
2. Lowering the settings on the two thermostats to approximately 120 degrees will reduce standby heat loss and energy consumption by 4% to 22%. Note that for proper operation of your water heater, the lower thermostat should be set at a slightly higher temperature than the top thermostat.
3. Insulating the first six feet of the hot- and cold-water lines coming out of the water heater will keep the water hotter longer and reduce heating cycles and heat loss via the pipes.
4. Installing low-flow showerheads and faucets in your home lowers the consumption of hot water, which reduces the time your tank needs to run. Fixtures rated at two gallons or less per minute are considered low flow.
5. Performing routine maintenance improves efficiency and extends the life of your water heater. For example, every six to 12 months, drain two to three gallons of water from the bottom of the tank to remove sediment buildup that could be negatively impacting your unit's performance.
6. While it's a bit more advanced type of DIY project, installing a smart controller can optimize your existing tank for maximum efficiency. A smart controller will learn your water usage patterns and adjust the heating cycles. Several different models are available online and all are fairly easy to install. These controllers are usually in the \$150 to \$225 range, not including installation.

If you have additional questions about the efficiency of your water heater, please reach out to the energy experts at your cooperative by calling 1-800-533-8658.

