

TROUBLESHOOTING A HIGH UTILITY BILL

When you get your electric bill each month and notice how much it is, please remember there are several factors that will determine whether it decreased, stayed the same or increased. A few of those factors to be considered are the weather, if you have any family visiting or staying a little longer than normal, cooking, lighting, equipment maintenance, heating or cooling and there are a few more.

Do you think your power bill is higher than normal? If so, here are a few things to check to find out why:

ACCURATE HISTORY

Review the kilowatt hour (kWh) history on your account for the last 13 months. This history is actually provided for you on every bill and can also be found at www.myusage.provo.org. You can compare your most recent month to that same month one year ago, and even hourly consumption. Weather fluctuations may be a factor in any major differences, but this is a good place to start your search. The kilowatt hours you use are the main driver of costs on your electric bill.

TRUE ELECTRIC BILL

Check to be sure this is a true high electric bill. Are there other charges beyond electric service?

1. Additional service fees (i.e deposits, connection/disconnection fees, returned check fees, late fees, utility transportation and telecom fees).
2. Have Past-due amounts from a previous bill been added to the total?
3. Are there ancillary charges added to the bill for other products or services?
 - a. Water
 - b. Waste Water
 - c. Storm Water
 - d. Solid Waste
 - e. Yard Waste
 - f. Recycling

TIERED RATES

Be sure to account for the tiered rate structure. Using more electricity will increase the bill.

Energy Charges

Block 1: up to 500 kWh\$0.07340 per kwh

Block 2: 501-1000 kWh\$0.10190per kwh

Block 3: 1000 kWh +\$0.12090per kwh

DAYS OF USE

Check the number of days that are billed for your electric use. This varies from bill to bill due to the number of days in a month, and a billing cycle may be a bit shorter or a bit longer so as not to make your bill due on a weekend or holiday. Is the number of days greater than other months in question because of meter readings or meter reading cycles? Is the daily average significantly different from other months in question?

These days can range anywhere from 28 to 32 days.

TROUBLESHOOTING A HIGH UTILITY BILL

COMPARE WINTER TO SUMMER

Check the kilowatt hour total by month. From the history, are the winter months higher, indicating some form of electric heat or higher hot water heater use? Do the summer months indicate air conditioning? Were temperatures higher or lower than normal during the period?

LIST APPLIANCES Make a list of appliances in your home. This list is important because all appliances DO NOT use the same amount of electricity, so sometimes we don't realize how much electricity we are actually using. Did you recently purchase a new appliance or receive one as a gift?

YOUR ELECTRIC METER DOESN'T GO ON VACATION If you leave your home for an extended period of time for business or vacation, remember that any appliance you leave plugged in or connected will continue to use electricity even while you are gone, especially your water heater, freezer, refrigerator, DVR, HVAC system, landscape irrigation, etc. Most of us note that the TV and lights were not on, but we forget about these items.

LIFESTYLE No two households use energy the same way, so comparing your energy bill to your neighbor's is like comparing apples to oranges. It is best to compare your current use to your past use as mentioned above. That is a more accurate record. Remember to determine if the size of your household has increased or did someone stay at home more. Have you added a new swimming pool or hot tub in your back yard? Have you had "guests" stay for an extended period? Do you have hobbies that include the use of power tools, ovens and other high electrical resistance tools or appliances?

LIGHTING, REFRIGERATION, APPLIANCES AND COOKING Lighting, refrigeration, cooking and appliances account for 56% of the total energy use in the normal household. The location of refrigerators and freezers is very important. Never place a refrigerator or freezer in direct sunlight or in unconditioned space such as a breezeway, garage or out-building. The refrigerator or freezer will have to work harder to overcome excessive heat during warmer months. Make sure that your refrigerators and freezers have adequate ventilation.

EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE If an appliance is more than 15 years old, the efficiency of that appliance may be decreasing significantly and requiring more energy to do its job. It is important to clean or replace the condenser, coils or filters on some appliances regularly. You may need to replace the appliance itself. Many times, old electrical wiring will have loose connections resulting in increased electrical use and create potential safety hazards.

SEASONS The additional heating or cooling load will cause an increase in electric use. Heating and cooling your home averages around 44% of your total energy use. Using space heaters, fireplaces, livestock heaters or vehicle block heaters in the winter can dramatically increase your energy consumption. Running a dehumidifier or watering of lawns, gardens and animals in the summer months will increase your energy use.

WEATHER Lightning can sometimes damage your sump pump or appliances increasing the running of these devices. If underground wiring-insulation is damaged, an increase in electrical use may occur when the ground is saturated with moisture.

CONSTRUCTION OR REMODELING ACTIVITIES Has there been any underground excavation recently? If you have underground wiring, the electrical wires may have been nicked resulting in a direct short. Many times, room additions are completed without proper sizing of HVAC for additional heating and cooling loads.

FIELD VISITS If after studying all the above information, you still feel there may be a deeper problem, please call 3-1-1 Customer Service at 801-852-6000. If you still believe there to be an actual meter issue we are happy to take your call and assist you. Please call Provo Power at 801-852-6802. After handling your inquiry on the phone, we determine if a field visit is necessary to determine any energy efficiency problems or check the meter.

WHEN SHOULD I ASK TO HAVE MY METER TESTED? Meters measure energy use and will not run fast. They are seldom the cause of a higher bill but often blamed. Less than 2 out of 1,000 meters are going to be wrong when tested. The electrical meter transmits data to the utility about every 15 minutes. If a meter fails it will go dark and not record or transmit any usage. Upon this rare occurrence, the utility is alerted of a meter failure (or other issue) and will send a technician out at the time to assess the issue and replace the meter if it happens to be bad.