

LEWIS COUNTY CHAPTER OF OLYMPIA MASTER BUILDERS



Tips to Manage Your Winter Energy and Water Bills to Save Your Money!

As temperatures begin to drop, many homeowners see their energy and water bills rise. Whether you are turning up the heat, turning on the holiday lights, or warming up your shower, energy usage tends to increase during these cooler months. Yet, there are many steps you can take — from small adjustments to major modifications — to stay warm and use less energy and water this winter. Here are a few simple tips to get you started.

Don't Heat an Empty Home

If household members are at school and work during the day, or you are traveling for the holiday season, adjust your thermostat to limit the amount of wasted heat. While you can do this manually each day, programmable and smart thermostats can automatically keep your house cozy when it counts and save energy when everyone's away.

The selection of smart thermostats is ever-expanding. Many keep track of how much you would save based on your region, size of home and heating type. In many cases, this investment results in significant savings.

Some utility companies also offer free programmable or smart thermostats to encourage their customers to use energy wisely. Check with your local utility to see what programs they offer.

Control the Air Flow

By sealing air leaks in a home, an average household can cut 10 percent of its monthly energy bill. Use caulk to seal any cracks or small openings on surfaces such as where window frames meet the house structure. Check your weatherstripping in exterior

door frames and replace any that is deteriorated or cracked.

Sealing windows and doors will help, but the worst culprits are cutouts for pipes or wires, gaps around recessed lights, and unfinished spaces behind cupboards and closets. Do-it-yourselfers can buy material that expands to fill the gaps and prevent air from escaping.

Use Energy-Efficient Holiday Lights

There is a wide and growing selection of holiday lighting options on the market today, meaning their energy usage and operating costs also vary. The most efficient lights are the light emitting diode (LED) options, which produce very little heat and last much longer than traditional lights. While the initial price of LED lights is often higher than less efficient lights, they use a lot less energy, meaning long-term energy savings. LED lights also typically last about 20,000 hours, which means you will not need to replace them as often. Plus, connecting your lights to an automatic timer helps you control the amount of energy that is being used, as well.

Cut back the Water Consumption and Save Tons of Money!

With the winter months rolling in and the holidays quickly approaching, saving on water consumption is a quick way to put money back into your pocket. If you want to reduce your water bills, be a little nicer to the environment, and save money - take the advice of the experts at the Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense program and start with a good hard look at your bathroom.



Bathrooms account for 50% of all indoor water use, so making a few simple fixes can pay you back in spades: Using less water saves you money, and it means less water going down the drain and to the local treatment plant, saving the energy it takes to clean and filter that water before it returns to your faucet.

Turn off the Tap

You don't need to keep the water running while you brush your teeth. Think about how many gallons you'll save each week by only turning on the faucet when it's time to rinse. (Hint: WaterSense says the average is 8-10 gallons per week per person.) And no need to wait for the water to get hot before you plug the tub at bath time - you'll probably need to turn the heat down before it's full, anyway. But don't forget: Taking a shower uses about a third of the water you'd need to fill a tub.

Refresh the Flapper

The rubber flapper in your toilet tank doesn't last forever - five years, tops. As the rubber degrades over time, the toilet starts leaking and usually, you

can't even tell. Replacing the flapper is an inexpensive fix that can save gallons of water a week.

Air it Out

Your faucet and showerhead last a long time, but it may make sense to replace both with new WaterSense-labeled models that aerate the water or create a pulsing pattern that makes you feel like you're getting a lot of water pressure, but you're actually reducing the flow by about 30%. That means you're using less - and heating less - water, which also saves energy.

The WaterSense program, launched in 2006, is both a labeling program for fixtures that save water and an education program to help families find ways to use less water and energy. The average family spends more than \$1,000 per year in water costs but can save more than \$380 annually from retrofitting with WaterSense labeled fixtures and ENERGY STAR certified appliances.

You may also want to take advantage of the FREE Home Energy Assessment Program offered by Puget Sound Energy.

A PSE-qualified specialist will perform an in-home evaluation of how your home uses energy and water. In addition, you'll also get:

A customized summary of recommended efficiency upgrades

Information about energy-efficient equipment rebates and helpful tips

Contractor referrals for future projects

And, you may also qualify for energy-efficient fixtures, including water-conserving showerheads and faucet aerators and on-the-spot installation of up to 20 free LEDs!

Replacing faucets and flappers and controlling air flow and cleaning filters are usually do-it-yourself type jobs, but when you want to tackle a more extensive project, you'll want to call the Lewis County professionals at Olympia Master Builders. Member remodelers and suppliers can help you identify and create a maintenance plan and perform the duties to save water, energy and money. For more information and tips on how to make your home more efficient this winter, visit omb.org for our online searchable database of Lewis County Members.

Why Hire Members of the Olympia Master Builders?

Olympia Master Builders (OMB) has been providing support for the local building industry since 1959 and now has over 480 members in the Thurston, Lewis, Mason, Grays Harbor, and Pacific counties.

The primary goal of Olympia Master Builders is to provide affordable housing for all economic segments of society. This is achieved by improving the construction industry and the business climate in which our members operate. We do this through:

- **ADVOCACY:** Providing a voice before government.
- **EDUCATION:** Developing a professional building industry.
- **PROMOTION:** Marketing member services.

By hiring members of the Olympia Master Builders, you are helping support the bigger picture of providing affordable housing in your community. We strive to keep building costs down so you and your

neighbors can afford to build new homes, remodel homes within a reasonable budget and support opportunities for more housing in your area.

Please take a few minutes to check out OMB's online, searchable database giving you the ability to email details about your project to several contractors at once.

Whether you are looking for a builder, remodeler, plumber, electrician, flooring specialist, banker, title company, roofer,

cabinet specialist, duct cleaning company, or any other home building related product or service provider, OMB is

your single source for any home related needs.

VISIT OMB.ORG TODAY!

Lewis County Government Affairs Update!

Washington State Building Codes Council - The SBCC met on Friday, September 15th, to address several elements of the changes and implementation of the 2021 building codes. The Building Industry Association of Washington (BIAW) and Olympia Master Builders (OMB) has been tracking all that is happening throughout this process. There was a significant coalition of groups, organizations, and individual builders who expressed thoughts of confusion and a lack of clarity around the upcoming implementation. The following are the highlights of Friday's meeting:

Effective date of all codes is now March 15, 2024. As passed by the SBCC by a vote of 11-1.

The next stage is a public comment period.

Lewis County Board of County Commissioners - the board released news that Lewis County is now partnering with OpenGov and has transitioned to OpenGov Procurement/

ProcureNow, a fully automated web-based electronic bidding and vendor management system. To continue to receive bid notifications, you will want to register for a FREE account today by going to <https://procurement.opengov.com/portal/lewiscountywa> and clicking on the 'Sign Up' button in the top right corner. Those who have business at the county around contracts or land use projects moving forward can expect a transition to virtual SmartGov processes around permitting and more.

City of Chehalis - The city's online permitting portal is live. In an effort to streamline the permitting process for builders, remodelers, and home owners, Chehalis has sought to transition much of their permitting process to a virtual format. That website is now live, and to address your future permitting needs you can set up an account and navigate the process at the following

link: <https://ci-chehalis.wa.smartgovcommunity.com/Public/Home>

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