

Take Control & Save

A Cooperative Effort for Energy Efficiency

www.TakeControlAndSave.coop

The truth about electric space heaters

If it seems too good to be true, it probably is

When outside temperatures drop, it is common to turn up the heat in your home. However, because heating costs have been rising, many are looking for a more cost-effective way to heat. You may have heard claims that purchasing a “magic” space heater will slash your electric bill by up to 50 percent, or that you can heat your home for pennies a day. What is not said is how many pennies it will take. Your local electric cooperative advises members to be cautious of such claims and investigate fully before purchasing a potentially costly space heater.



Greg Brooks, Walton EMC

There are no “magic” space heaters



To achieve the savings these “magic” space heater advertisements claim, you must turn the temperature in your house down to between 50 and 60 degrees and move the heater with you from room to room. Not only is this a potential safety hazard, you also sacrifice convenience and comfort in the rest of your home.

In addition, electric plug-in space heaters are not more efficient than other electric heating sources, and all electric space heaters are equally efficient. An electric space heater rated at 1,500 watts will put out the same amount of heat regardless what you pay for it.

You would be better off to take the money you would spend on a space heater and put it toward weatherization improvements to your home, such as adding insulation and caulking. Find out more about weatherization improvements on the back of this page.

Keep safety in mind

Space heating poses a much higher risk of fire, death, injury and loss per million users than central heating. In 2006, an estimated 19,400 reported home structure fires involving stationary or portable space heaters resulted in 390 deaths, 820 injured persons and \$478 million in direct property damage.¹

If you do use a space heater, be sure to:

- Keep the heater at least 3 feet from flammable items such as curtains and furniture.
- Choose a heater that is certified by a nationally recognized testing institution such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL).
- Select a space heater with a guard around the heating element.
- Keep children and pets away from heaters.
- Be sure the heater has an automatic shut-off switch if it tips over.
- Never leave a space heater unattended.

¹National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), <http://www.nfpa.org/assets/files//OS.spaceheaters.pdf>

Consider the operating cost

Before you purchase an electric plug-in space heater that claims to lower your heating bill, consider the operating costs. The cost to operate depends on the type of heater and the size of room you are heating. Use the formula provided to calculate operating costs of an electric space heater, or any electric appliance.



Operating costs

Watts x hours of operation ÷
1,000 x kilowatt-hour (kWh) electric rate

For example, a 1,500-watt space heater
running 24 hours per day would cost
\$3.24 per day at a rate of \$0.09 per kWh.

$$1,500 \times 24 = 36,000$$

$$36,000 \div 1,000 = 36$$

$$36 \times .09 = \$3.24$$

That's more than \$90 a month for just one heater!



Stay warm for less

There are many ways to remain warm during the chilly winter months without the use of an electric space heater, such as dressing in layers and using an electric blanket at night. Such ideas provide a quick solution, but may not be comfortable or convenient.

If you are looking for long-term fixes for your heating needs, your cooperative has a program called *Take Control & Save* to help members manage energy use and reduce their energy consumption in smart ways. Using energy wisely will help members keep their electricity bills as low as possible while maintaining comfort.

Effective measures include:

- Install a ground-source or air-source heat pump that will heat your home in the winter and cool your home in the summer.
- Install a programmable thermostat. Turn it down when you are gone for the day and when you are sleeping.
- Add insulation, caulk and weather-strip.
- Strategically place fans at low speed to pull warm air from the rest of the house into the cooler space.
- Change your furnace filter regularly. A dirty filter forces the furnace to work harder, decreasing its efficiency and increasing heating costs.
- Have a ventilation, heating and air conditioning technician check the duct work in your home. Ducts may have come loose from the main trunk and could be feeding warm air into the attic or crawl space instead of the living areas of your home.
- Complete a home energy audit and discover more ways you can improve your overall energy use.



To learn more about how to save energy, visit www.TakeControlAndSave.coop.

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