



Extension News Column

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Water heating can take a chunk out of your budget. In fact, according to Rich Seifert, the CES housing Specialist, by looking at the energy consumption in his own house, he found that his family used 40% of the heating oil in his home to heat water. So small changes in heating water can make a big difference in fuel consumption.

Most houses here in Alaska have two types of water heating systems. One is the traditional hot water heater and the other is when the boiler heats the water. So let's look at ways to save with both types of systems.

- **Turn down the thermostat.** When you have to mix cold water with the hot to be able to stand under the shower, why not just turn down the temperature to begin with? Remember that 130° is hot enough to scald you. Turn down the temperature to 120°-125°.
- **Fix leaky faucets.** Every 30 drops a minute from a hot water faucet costs you around 18 kilowatts a month.

If you have a traditional water heater, there are some additional ways to save.

- **Wrap your heater in a special blanket.** Home improvement stores sell water heater blankets for about \$50. This will reduce energy consumption by 10-15%, or about 21 kilowatts a month for a family of two.
- **Turn it off!** I'm not saying to use cold water, but there are some practical ways to accomplish this.

You can use a timer or simply cut off the heater. A \$40 timer can automatically turn off an electric water heater when you go to work, then back on before you come home, off after you go to bed and back on before time for your morning shower.

I know people who simply flip the breaker to turn off the heater after their morning shower, but that may not be practical. Recently a friend of mine had a timer box installed behind the water heater, which turns the water heater on for one hour every morning. With an electrician installing it, she actually spent \$128. It did require her to group her hot water needing activities to the morning hours, but this hasn't been a challenge for her. With a blanket on her water heater, it saves enough hot water to last until the next morning when it cycles on again.

No matter what steps you choose to take, get a handle on your energy costs related to heating water.