

“How Low Can You Go?”

by Randy Lueth

That’s the challenge being issued by the Sustainable Marshfield Committee to the residential customers of the Marshfield Electric Utility. We all need to be aware of the power we’re using and then attempt to reduce that amount – two actions that will save money on our utility bills and reduce wasteful energy consumption in our community. The goal of this challenge is not to reduce our quality of life but to make us all aware of the electricity that we are using inadvertently.

The first step of the Challenge is to find your most recent utility bill from Marshfield Utilities. Then locate the line under ‘electric’ that says ‘residential kWh’. This is the amount of power your household used between the last two meter readings, measured in kilowatt hours. That’s using 1000 watts of energy for an hour, which is about what an electric oven uses. This number on your power bill will be the focus of the “How Low Can You Go” Challenge.

The second part of the Challenge will take a little more effort and some persistence. We all enjoy the convenience that the multitude of electrical appliances and devices brings to our lives. We also are not a wasteful lot by nature as we hate to waste food or other resources. The problem often is that electricity is so convenient that we don’t even think about our consumption. Televisions, VCR’s, computers, and many other devices are using power even when they are not turned on. Any device that has a digital clock or pilot light that comes on when it’s ‘plugged in’ is consuming power.

Using a power strip to turn off/on that seldom-used TV or VCR, using only compact fluorescent light bulbs, adding a motion sensor switch in some rooms, disconnecting that old refrigerator in the garage until needed, these things will start to reduce our energy use. We can even turn off the surge protector on our computers overnight. This is electricity that we’re really wasting and that isn’t contributing to our quality of life.

Next month when that power bill shows up again, you can check your ‘residential kWh’ to see if you’re headed lower or need to work harder at your household conservation. The most recent national numbers show that an average US household is using about 1040 kWh per month. You can start celebrating already if you’re below the national average. Lee Babcock of Marshfield Utilities stated “Residential customers within the City of Marshfield used an average of 715 kWh for the month of August.” Can you go lower Marshfield?

Several members of the Sustainable Marshfield Committee are engaged in a friendly competition and the current winner is below 400 kWh per month! Simple steps like these can help to make us all aware of the power we’re using and the carbon dioxide that is being released into the atmosphere by our consumption. Maybe if we all work at it we can reduce the number of new power plants that we need to build. We will also begin to slow down this global warming thing. Good luck going ‘lower’.



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