

November 2018 | Washington • Idaho

## Baby, it's cold outside



**Have you felt the need to bundle up lately?** Is that breeze

getting a little too cool for comfort? Winter is just around the corner and your house is feeling the chill, too.

Ever wonder how your energy use can increase if you haven't changed anything in your home? Consider a warm cup of coffee. In the summer, a warm cup of coffee will stay warm for quite some time, even if placed outside. If placed outside during the winter though, it would cool down rather quickly. Even if you don't touch your thermostat, your home reacts the same as a cup of coffee — retaining heat in warmer weather and losing it in cooler weather.

Why does this matter? As the temperature outside drops, your house cools down more quickly, causing its heating system to run more frequently and for longer periods of time. This causes your energy consumption to spike, increasing your energy bill—typically between October and February. The cost of heating your home can account for 40% to 60% of your monthly winter energy bill, so what can you do to help manage your energy usage?

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## At the drop of a pen

**Katie learns the importance of carbon monoxide detectors.**

Katie has always been a safety-minded person. Since having a son eight months ago, that inclination has gone into overdrive. She has a perfectly kid-proofed house, a car seat with the highest safety rating, and of course, she knows what to do if she smells natural gas in her home.

Despite all her know-how, it took a morning at her sister's house to realize she was missing something important.

On that Saturday morning, Katie and her sister Miranda sat at the kitchen table. As they discussed a movie they'd both recently seen, Katie accidentally knocked a pen to the floor. As she knelt down to grab it, she noticed a small device plugged into an electrical outlet. It almost looked like a smoke detector, but she didn't quite recognize it.

"What is that?"

"Oh, it's a carbon monoxide, or CO, detector. Your house doesn't have them?"

Immediately, Katie knew her older home didn't have any installed. Miranda went on to explain how carbon monoxide, or CO, is odorless, colorless, and toxic for humans and animals.

Katie was alarmed enough to pull out her phone and do some research. She saw that carbon monoxide detectors are required on new homes, and quite essential for any home that uses natural gas, wood stoves, or propane. She learned that early symptoms often resemble the flu, but without the fever, and can quickly get worse after that.

On the way home, Katie stopped and bought two carbon monoxide detectors—one for each floor of her home. For the cost of about \$40, Katie also got some peace of mind.

One small, easy, inexpensive step will safeguard her family—and can safeguard yours, too—from a serious health problem caused by carbon monoxide.

To learn more and watch a short video visit: [myavista.com/safetyvideos](http://myavista.com/safetyvideos).



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Use this handy checklist to get started:

- **Adjust thermostat** – Reducing the temperature just three degrees can result in a 10% reduction on your bill.
- **Check water heater** – Water heating accounts for nearly 14% of your monthly usage and is the 2nd largest source of consumption in your home.
- **Seal drafts and leaks** – Use items like insulation, window plastic, caulk, and weather stripping to keep the warm air in and the cold air out.
- **Check fireplace dampers** – When not in use, a chimney can draw off as much as 25% of the heater air in your house if the damper is left open.
- **Change furnace filter and remove buildup on baseboard heaters** – Dust and debris will block heat transfer, so even if your heater clicks on, your room will not warm up efficiently. Our Furnace Filter Program can help ensure you never forget to replace your filter again.

For more winter energy-saving tips, visit [myavista.com/winterbill](http://myavista.com/winterbill).

## It's holiday baking time!

**Over the holidays, your oven can get a real workout.** To help your oven operate efficiently and economically, follow these tips:

- Since it's a long, slow cook for turkey or holiday ham, there's no need to preheat your oven. Unless you're baking breads or pastries, you may not need to preheat at all.
- Don't open the oven door to take a peek at what's inside. Instead, turn on the oven light and check through the window.
- Cook several items at the same time, but make sure there's enough room for the heat to circulate.
- If you use glass or ceramic dishes, you can lower your oven temperature by 25 degrees and foods will cook just as quickly.
- For cooking on your stovetop, be sure to match the size of the pot or pan to the size of the burner, and always cover pots when cooking.



For more energy-saving tips, visit [myavista.com/advice](http://myavista.com/advice).

## Your electric bill in Idaho decreases

**We recently told you about the annual rate adjustments filed in Idaho each year that better align the price you pay for energy with our costs for providing service.** These electric adjustments were approved by the Idaho Public Utilities Commission and went into effect on Oct. 1, 2018. Based on average usage, electric customers in Idaho can expect to see a decrease of \$4.85 per month, or 5.5 percent.

Get more information about your energy prices and annual rate adjustments at [myavista.com/rates](http://myavista.com/rates).



## Holiday lights

**! Bright, twinkling lights are one of the joys of the season, whether they're on the eaves of your home or strung upon trees.**

While those merry little lights are a delight for many, incorrect usage can cause fires, injuries from falls or electrical shocks. To keep the holidays festive and fun, follow these safety tips while decorating outdoors:

- Use lights—and if needed, extension cords—that are approved for outdoor use.
- Before decorating, check all light strands for damages and burned out lights. Frayed insulation, exposed wires and broken plugs are all hazards and should be discarded. When replacing bulbs, unplug the strand.
- Consider purchasing miniature or LED lights as they use less energy and are long lasting. LED lights are also shatterproof and present no fire hazard.
- To avoid accidentally leaving your lights on, consider a timer. Make sure the timer you use is rated to handle the total wattage of your lights.

Visit [myavista.com/safety](http://myavista.com/safety) for more safety tips.

## Connect With Us

Mailing Address: 1411 E. Mission, PO Box 3727, Spokane, WA 99220-3727

Toll-Free: (800) 227-9187 | Web Site: [myavista.com](http://myavista.com)

E-Mail: [ask@myavista.com](mailto:ask@myavista.com)

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## Did you know?

A ¼" gap around a door is like having a 4" hole in the wall. **CHECK OUT** how to install weather stripping by visiting our DIY page at [youtube.com/user/AvistaUtilities](http://youtube.com/user/AvistaUtilities).