



## Why Your Utility Bills Soar in Winter

Written by: Sarah Battaglia

Ripping open a heating bill during the height of the holiday season is worse than unraveling a string of twinkle lights. Since when does it cost more to heat a 600-square-foot apartment than it does to feed a family of eight? Alright, that may be a bit of an exaggeration, but I'm sure that's how most of us feel during the winter months.

So what exactly forces your energy bills to escalate during the most joyous time of the year?

### 1 – IT'S A LITTLE NIPPY OUT THERE!

It's no surprise that the chief perpetrator is the weather. We're all guilty of turning the heat up a few degrees when it gets chilly. (That Snuggie just isn't cutting it.) But there is more to the story of why your bills are higher than normal.

Extreme cold and menacing storms can have an impact on the production and shipment of valuable fuels, such as natural gas and crude oil. When the fuel inventories are strained, the purchase price climbs, and that gets reflected in *your bill*.

### 2 – OPTIONS ARE BECOMING LIMITED.

As the Environmental Protection Agency works to [cut carbon emissions](#) by 30 percent over the next 16 years, many coal-fired power plants are scheduled to permanently shut down, sending more customers to rely on natural gas. Basic economics tells us that when demand for a commodity increases, price increases as well.

### 3 – LONGER BILLING PERIODS ARE A POSSIBILITY.

Utilities typically have a set timeframe for their billing periods, but we all know what happens during the holidays; everything comes to a screeching halt so we can enjoy the yuletide, caroling, and brick-like fruitcake. The typical billing period ranges between 29 and 31 days, but the holidays could tack on a couple extra, adding a few dollars to your typical bill.

There isn't much you can do about the billing cycles, but there are lots of helpful tips you can implement to keep your winter energy use to a minimum.

Start by lowering your thermostat a few degrees and taking advantage of other heat sources throughout your house. Leave the bathroom door open after you take a shower to let the steam into the nearby rooms, and allow the heat from your oven to spread into the kitchen after you finish cooking. Seal up any leaks in windows or doors to prevent those nasty drafts. And rotate your ceiling fan blades to bring the trapped warm air down to you.

We're chock-full of ways to save on your utility bills this winter, so check back in a few weeks to get the full version. And in the meantime, start formulating your plan of attack on that fruitcake!