

The North Haven Clean Energy Task Force will be working hard over the coming months to encourage residents and businesses to support clean energy policies and practices. Our main immediate goal is to get North Haveners to sign up for the CT CleanEnergyOptions program as part of their electricity utility. For every 100 residents, the town will receive a free solar system from the Connecticut Clean Energy Fund.

Many people may be concerned about the slight increase in their electric bill in signing up (about \$4 - 7 a month). However, there are many easy things that you can do that will offset this minor cost, and lower your utility bill. I would like to tell you about my personal experience recently. My bills since the recent large rate increase were running \$212 to 250 a month. I had already switched all of my incandescent light bulbs to CFLs (compact florescent lights). I know this helped, but since I made the change at the same time prices went up, it was hard to see the savings. Like most families, we struggle to regularly turn off lights, televisions and other appliances.

But then I did three things that made a major impact on my bill. Many people may be aware that older appliances use much more electricity than newer models – especially those with the EnergyStar label. We replaced a fifteen to twenty year old year old dishwasher with a much more efficient model. We also finally got rid of the “monster in the basement” - a 25 plus year old refrigerator. Refrigerators are one of the most expensive appliances to run. We were lucky and obtained a free later model fridge. Even though this appliance uses a fair amount of power, as you will see below, getting rid of the older one apparently had a major impact.

Have you heard about the “phantom load” power users in your home? Phantom or vampire loads come from appliances that are sucking up the juice even when turned off or not in use. Appliances have “standby power” to support features such as instant-on, remote control, channel memory and LED clock displays. Televisions are still using about 75% of their wattage even when turned off. What to do? I bought a few low-cost power strips and plugged several appliances in to them. For instance, I plugged the television, cable box and DVD player into one strip. At night, we switch off the power strip which means these devices are using no power. For more information, go to this article in the CT Department of Environmental Protections “P2” newsletter: <http://www.ct.gov/dep/lib/dep/p2/newsletter/p2viewsummer07.pdf>

What was the net result of my energy-saving actions? My bill dropped from \$212 to \$151 in one month! Now that was an investment! With these savings, choosing the CleanEnergy Option is no sweat!

Energy Tip of the Month:

Get rid of any refrigerator or freezer in your home (“monster in the basement”) that is more than 10 years old – you will save as much as \$100 annually in energy costs if replaced by an ENERGY STAR model.

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