

Kill A Watt for Earth Day

Written by Steve Frank
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Looking for ways to save energy and money? Tracking your electricity usage is the first step in reducing both areas.

In honor of Earth Day, Blue Ridge Electric Membership Corporation is introducing a new device called "Kill-A-Watt EZ™ electricity monitoring meters" to help members identify which of their appliances are using the most electricity -- and where they can save money by cutting usage. Members can begin checking out the devices at all local libraries in the cooperative's service area in Caldwell, Watauga, Ashe, Alleghany, Wilkes and Avery counties as well as in the cooperative's district offices located in these same counties. Additionally, Blue Ridge Electric has placed several Kill-A-Watt meters in the Belk Library at Appalachian State University for checkout.

Due to expected high demand, the devices are limited to a two-week checkout.

"Education and becoming aware of how your home uses energy are keys to reducing usage and costs," said Brian Crutchfield, Blue Ridge Electric's director of sustainable development. "We're excited to offer our members this free resource to help them make better informed decisions on how to save energy and control costs."

The Kill-A-Watt device simply plugs into a wall outlet and then you plug your appliance or electronic into the device. Kill-A-Watt then monitors how much electricity the appliance is using and displays the result on a small screen, showing you both the usage and cost associated with that usage.

There a total of 48 devices available for loan and they may checked out from the libraries above or at your local Blue Ridge Electric district office. The device comes with a power strip and information about using the Kill-A-Watt EZ™ device.

In addition, an enclosed chart helps users calculate the total cost of energy used in a day. On it, users can record the cost per kilowatt hour for a number of suggested devices (among them: refrigerator, DVD player, lamp, cell phone charger, video game system and others) and the total cost of energy used.

"It is also educational to make members aware of what's known as "vampire electricity"--the electricity used by some appliances and devices even when they are turned off," said Crutchfield. "Due to 'instant on' and other features, many appliances such as TVs and cell phone chargers continue to use electricity even when turned off. According to the Department of Energy statistics, this vampire, or "phantom load" can account for up to 10 percent of household electricity usage," he explained. "One key to reducing this is by using power strips to completely turn off power or simply unplugging these devices when not in use."

Kill-A-Watt EZ™ meters can be purchased for approximately \$35 from home improvement stores or at Blue Ridge Electric's online energy efficiency store under the GreenSmart tab. But members may want to first try it out with the available lending program at the 12 local libraries, ASU Belk Library, and cooperative district offices made possible by Blue Ridge Electric. "We hope this inspires our members take more energy efficiency steps and helps them save energy and money," said Crutchfield.