



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

## SMART ENERGY SOLUTIONS

# Take Control of Your Electric Use

### What Is Hourly Pricing And How Does It Compare To What Most People Have Now?

Generally, electric customers are charged a price that remains constant regardless of the time of day or season. But beneath this constant price, market-based electric rates or real-time prices, fluctuate dramatically – soaring above and below the fixed price you pay. These market-based prices are calculated through basic supply and demand principles - the higher the demand, the higher the price.

Hourly billing is a way for consumers to take advantage of the market by choosing low cost times for high-energy activities. With hourly billing you pay the market price for electricity. When prices are high you can choose strategies to reduce your electrical usage and when prices are low you can take advantage of them. Hourly billing removes the blanket rate, allowing incentives for strategic energy use, and providing a way for you to save money.



### Why Switch To Hourly Pricing?

Energy providers aren't the first to praise the benefits of hourly billing, but power-savvy customers are. With knowledge of pricing, consumers can make wiser energy choices about when and how they use electricity. This empowers consumers to make smart energy choices that benefit the environment and their wallet.



If consumers shifted 7 percent of their energy usage from peak periods (e.g. midday on a summer afternoon) to less costly times (e.g. before bedtime), they would save \$23 billion a year.



If demand was reduced during peak hours, there would be less need for power plants – particularly “peaker plants” which spew pollution during the hottest times of the day when air quality is the lowest.



Fewer power plants means less pollution of our air, soil, and water - and reduced burning of fossil fuels which contribute to global warming.



The average kW/hour price for energy in IL is 7.73¢. The market rate can fluctuate as low as 2¢ and even higher than 15¢ per kW hour



With precious money and energy saved, everybody wins.

## Who Should Switch To Hourly Pricing?

Anybody can take control of their energy consumption, but candidates who will find most value from hourly rates are those who:



Are interested in using energy wisely in their homes



Are willing to make changes to how they use electricity during peak hours



Want to educate themselves on energy efficiency

Are willing to monitor the market energy rates

Are not home during the weekdays (as energy prices are highest on summer afternoons)



If you are a conscientious consumer who is willing to educate and act in ways to minimize your electricity use during peak hours, you will be keeping more money in your pocket and taking less energy from the environment. Hourly billing is a way for you to save.

## How Do I Switch To Hourly Pricing?

If you are in the Chicago or Northern Illinois area, your electricity provider is most likely Commonwealth Edison (ComEd). With a 5.2 million-person customer base, they are the largest electric utility in Illinois. Central and Southern Illinois is served by Amren.

You can switch to this billing option by joining ComEd's residential real-time pricing program (via transitioning your service to "Basic Electric Service-Hourly or BES-H). Com-Ed's main website does not emphasize this offering, but more information is found on their auxiliary hourly site [www.thewattspot.com](http://www.thewattspot.com). Read over this site to learn more details about this program and its benefits, before deciding if you should switch.

Amren customers should go to their alternate web site [www.powersmartpricing.org](http://www.powersmartpricing.org) to get details about their hourly power pricing program and to sign up.

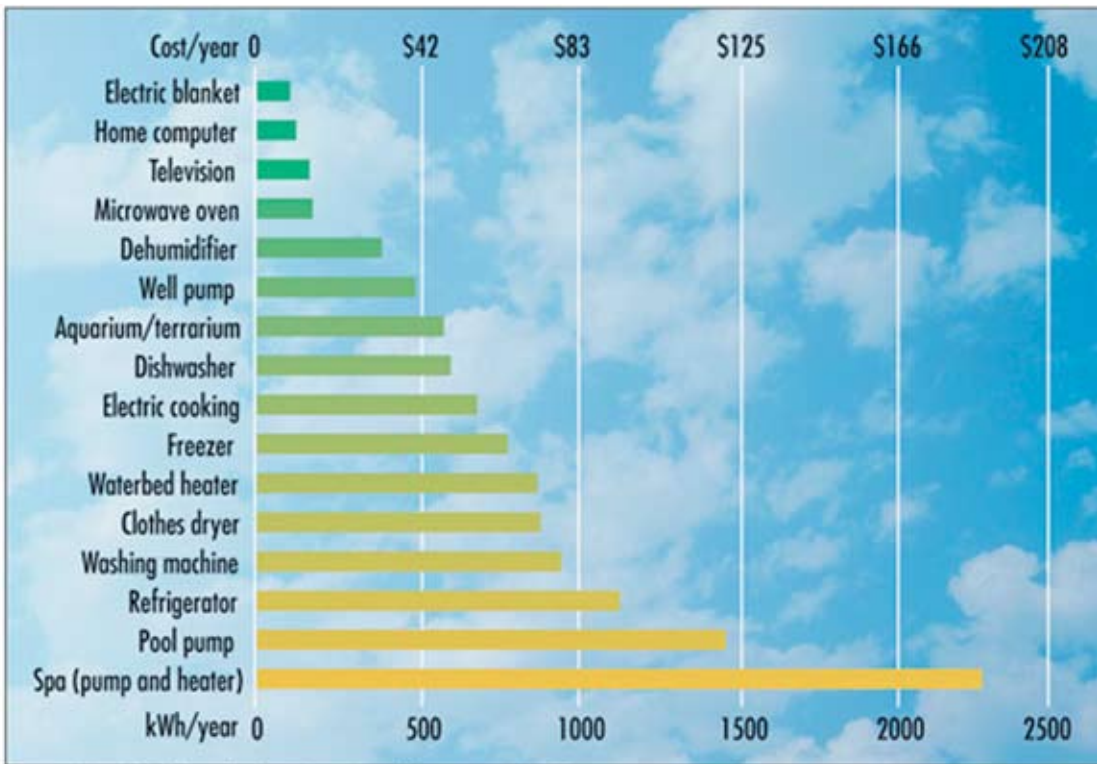
## How Do I Get The Most Savings?

The most important factors in saving big on your energy bills are: efficiency, education, and action. When transitioning to hourly billing, special focus on how and when you use energy becomes a factor. Savings will not happen unless you are a conscientious user.

In general, there are easy things you can do to be a smart energy user:

- Conduct a simple home energy audit yourself (try using our home energy audit checklist)
- Check insulation levels of your walls, windows, attic, basement, floors, etc
- Check for holes and cracks in your walls, plumbing/light fixtures, ceilings, windows etc. to insure you don't have a silent drain of energy
- Check your appliances and heating/cooling units for maintenance
- Check for open fireplace dampers
- Switch your lights to Compact Fluorescent Light (CFL) bulbs
- Install occupancy sensors or timers on your lights
- Purchase energy efficient appliances (Look for the Energy Star logo) [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)

## How Much Electricity Do Appliances Use?



This chart shows how much energy a typical appliance uses per year and its corresponding cost based on national averages.

For example, a refrigerator uses almost five times the electricity the average television uses.

Cost is based upon 8.3¢ per kWh hour.

Table Courtesy of US DOE: Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy web site.

### Reduce “Phantom Load”

The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that 75% of energy used in the home is from devices that are turned “off.” That little clock on your coffee-maker doesn’t look so cute anymore, does it? Reduce phantom load by:

- Don’t just turn off - Unplug!
- Plug appliances/TVs/computers into outlets or power strips that can be switched off
- Unplug phone/camera/battery chargers when not in use. These continue to draw power even if the phone, etc. is not attached.

#### Did You Know?

Most TVs, stereos, and DVD players use power even when “off.” That is how they know when to turn “on” via remote control.

### Timing Is Everything!

Move your high-energy tasks to low energy price hours such as the late night or early morning, instead of the mid-afternoon. Many appliances have timers for when they will run.

- Run the dishwasher or laundry at night when prices are lower.
- Set your air conditioner to a warmer temperature when you are not home and wait till evening before turning it back down.

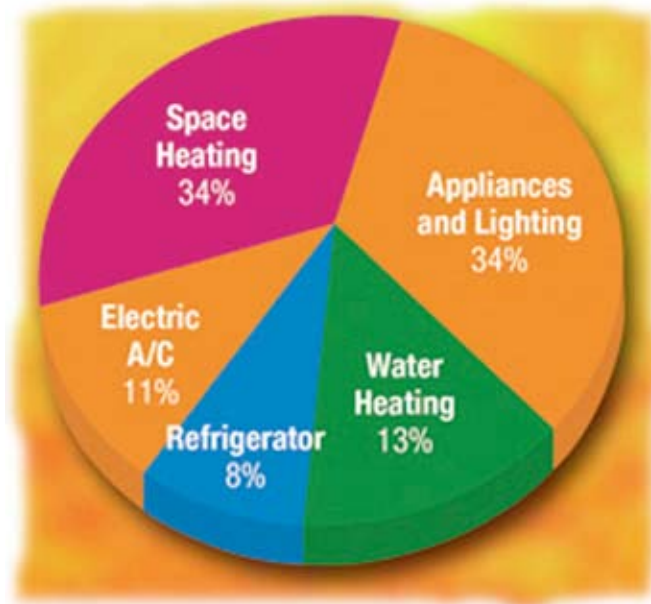
### More Ways To Save

- Let your dishes air-dry instead of using your dishwasher’s drying cycle
- In summer, use fans to move the air and set your thermostat higher. Every degree above 72 will reduce your bill about 3%.
  - In the winter, layer clothing and set the thermostat cooler.
  - Turn off your computer monitor when not in use (even when in “sleep” mode).
  - Wash only full loads of dishes and laundry.
  - Light the area you are using instead of the entire room with smaller task or desk lamps.
  - Do you really need lights on in the daytime? Sit by a window for natural light that will improve your mood and save you money.
- Close blinds in S, E, and W facing windows during hot summer days to keep your home cooler.
- Clean/replace your furnace filters and refrigerator coils at least twice a year.
- Turn off the lights when you leave a room

The first step to energy efficiency is awareness. Observe your energy habits in your home and educate yourself about your energy choices. The table to the right shows how the typical person uses electricity in their home.

If you are a conscientious consumer who is willing to educate and act in ways to minimize your electricity use during peak hours, hourly billing may be a way for you to keep more money in your pocket while take less energy from the environment.

Hourly billing may be an efficient choice for your household, but it is not the only solution. Learn about ways to save through investment in renewable power, net metering, and on-site energy offset (such as wind or solar).



#### How We Use Energy in Our Homes

Heating and cooling accounts for the biggest chunk of a typical utility bill.

Table Courtesy of US DOE: Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy web site.

### More Resources to Save Energy and Money

Sierra Club's Smart Energy Solutions  
<http://www.sierraclub.org/energy>

US Dept. of Energy: Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy  
[http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/your\\_home/](http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/your_home/)

Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance  
<http://www.mwalliance.org/resources.php>

The Home Energy Saver - Web Based Home Energy Audit Tool  
<http://hes.lbl.gov>

State of Illinois: Winter Energy Conservation  
<http://www.keepwarm.illinois.gov>



Up or Down - It's Your Choice



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