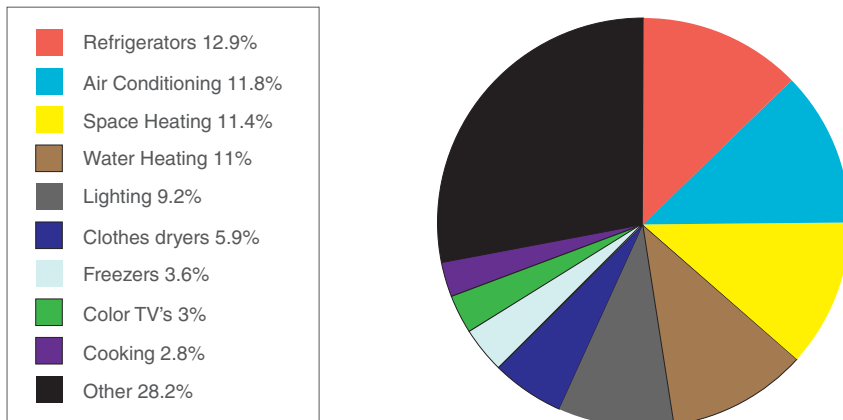




Wasted energy?

You may not realise it, but electricity consumption is one of the most environmentally destructive activities that we are involved in. Every time you flick on a light switch, or notch up the AC to cool down your living room, you are polluting the environment and contributing to global warming. How can this be? Electricity is mostly generated by burning fossil fuels (coal, oil and gas) and this results in air pollution and the release of vast quantities of greenhouse gasses. These greenhouse gasses lead to global warming, which will change the face of the Earth as we know it. But what can we do about it? It may seem at first glance that we only use the amount of electricity that we need, but there are many simple ways that we can cut down on how much we use. Slashing our electricity use saves us money on our monthly bills as well as doing the environment a favour - two very good reasons to make that extra bit of effort.

You may not be aware of how much electricity is used in an average household like yours. The following chart provides an overview of which appliances are the most expensive to run in terms of their electricity consumption. These are based on a typical household in the United States. Here in Oman, we probably "spend" much more on air conditioning – especially during the summer!



(Source: U.S. Department of Energy, 1997)

A staggering statistic from the UK (one that prompted me to write this article) perfectly demonstrates the impact that we, as individuals, can make. And this impact can be positive rather than negative. When we turn our televisions off using the remote control, they don't turn off, but go onto standby and continue to guzzle a significant amount of electricity. If everyone in the UK turned their TV's off with the switch, rather than the remote, two entire power stations could be permanently shut down!

10 Ways to Save Electricity

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By Gianna Minton, ESO Founding Member



Here are ten simple ways that we can all make a difference; both to the environment and our monthly bills!

- 1) Turn off your TV and other appliances (VCR's, Satellite decoders etc.) at the source.
Don't allow appliances to sit on stand-by and waste electricity.
- 2) Turn off lights in your home when they are not in use. Train your children to do this and allow them to form a good habit.
- 3) Spend a bit of extra money on energy-saving lightbulbs. They will last longer – and the extra initial investment will be more than paid off.
- 4) Turn your AC up by one degree. You are unlikely to feel the difference. Your home need not feel like the North Pole in the middle of the summer!
- 5) Save your washing until you have a full load to fill up the washing machine and use cooler washing settings whenever you can. Running half-loads wastes water as well as electricity. Use a clothes-line rather than a dryer whenever possible.
- 6) Make full use of your fridge/freezer by keeping it full. When it is empty it takes more electricity to heat the empty space than it would to keep food and drinks cold, since they retain their temperature more efficiently.
- 7) Make sure your house is well insulated to keep the cold in and the heat out. Don't leave doors or windows open when you're running the AC!
- 8) Turn off your water heater during the summer. The water from the "cold" tap in your tank will be more than warm enough for a shower.
- 9) Turn your home and office PC's off at night. If you are unable to turn off the whole computer – at least turn off the monitor, as this uses the most electricity.

