



PRESS RELEASE

Stacy Wemhoff
Communications Coordinator
swemhoff@loup.com
(402) 562-5711

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
8/22/2019

EnergyWiseSM Tip: Laundry

By: Cory Fuehrer, NPPD Energy Efficiency Program Manager

Though Benjamin Franklin said the only things for certain are death and taxes, he obviously forgot laundry. Everyone contends with it in one way or another. The majority of us have our own washer and dryer at home. Depending on your appliances and strategy for conquering this never-ending task, laundering could account for up to 13 percent of your household's annual energy use. Consider some of the following ways you might save some of that energy while keeping everything clean.

Start with the washer. Did you know that with traditional laundering practices in the past, 90 percent of the cost of running a clothes washer went toward heating water? With recent advances in formulating laundry detergents, most loads can be done with lower or cold water temperatures and still remove dirt and stains. Oxygenated cleaners and bleach alternatives allow you to brighten whites with cold water too.

You will likely still need hot water cycles for dealing with oily stains, dirty diapers, or sanitizing sheets and towels when desired. Since 120°F water is sufficient to accomplish any of these, now is a good time to check your home's hot water temperature. Test it with an accurate thermometer at the faucet nearest to your washer. Be sure the water runs long enough to reach its maximum temperature. Adjust your water heater and check again until you achieve a 120°F setting.

If possible, only do full loads or adjust settings on your washer for partial loads. Increase your washer's spin cycle speed and/or time to reduce energy use in the clothes dryer. Your machine may have additional settings that optimize efficiency. If you are not sure, review the owner's manual.

The average life expectancy of a washing machine is 12 years. If your washer is nearing or past this age, be sure the replacement you select is ENERGY STAR-certified. Units that have earned the ENERGY STAR are about 25 percent more efficient than non-certified models that simply meet the federal minimum standard for energy efficiency. Consider buying a front-loading machine. On average, they use two-thirds less water than top-loading units, which could also reduce water heating costs.

With a load freshly washed, move to the dryer. Always clean the lint screen between loads. This improves air circulation and increases the efficiency of your dryer. If you use dryer sheets, know they can leave a film on the screen that reduces air flow. Scrubbing the filter in warm water with a soft brush will remove this film. Assuming you are like the majority of Americans who have a vented dryer, when was the last time you cleaned your dryer duct? If it has been more than one year, DO IT NOW! Not only will lint build-up reduce air flow and increase energy use, it can become a potential fire hazard.

Although rigid duct is best, most households use flexible duct for convenience. If so, be sure to keep lengths of flexible duct as short as possible while making turns as gradual as possible to minimize lint build up and restricting air flow. Operating your vented dryer without being vented to the outdoors is not recommended due to indoor air quality, health concerns and potential fire hazards. At a minimum, doing so can dramatically increase your air-conditioning costs during the summer.

If your dryer has them, use the efficiency features to reduce energy use. Selecting the automatic cycle instead of timed drying utilizes the dryer's one or more moisture sensors to determine when laundry is dry to avoid overdrying. Since dryer sheet residue can build up on sensors and cause the dryer to shut off prematurely, you should consult the operator's manual as to how and when to clean the sensors.

Even less than washers, the average life expectancy of a clothes dryer is 11 years. When considering replacement, select one that ENERGY STAR-certified. Compared to non-certified models, dryers receiving ENERGY STAR certification are 20 percent more efficient.

Finally, consider that using a clothes line outside during warmer months or an inside drying rack saves all of the energy from using a dryer. Though the drying process is much slower than using your dryer, it is also gentler on clothing.

For additional information on how to make your home, business or school EnergyWiseSM, contact Loup Power District, Cornhusker Public Power District, Nebraska Public Power District, or your local public power utility. While you're at it, check out the EnergyWiseSM programs designed to help you save money. Find energy efficiency information online at www.loup.com, www.cornhusker-power.com, and www.nppd.com/save-energy.

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