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Power strips versus surge protectors

As the proliferation of electronics impacts our daily lives, we realize there simply are not enough outlets in our homes. This is particularly true for older homes. As a result, we end up with a number of "outlet expanders," more commonly known as power strips.

Power strips are generic and fulfill a very simple function. They are inexpensive, and the quality is usually on par with the price.

Keeping this in mind, let's look at factors to consider when purchasing a power strip or a surge protector.

Important tip:

Make sure you know the amperage rating of the outlet into which you are connecting the strip and other equipment. A residential circuit can overload if you are not careful.

- Look for power strips with a built-in circuit breaker. If you connect too many electronics and devices, the strip will kick out the circuit breaker rather than causing the breaker in your electric panel to trip.
- Pay attention to the orientation of the outlets. The typical design is along the length of the strip, facing the bottom or end of the strip. Power strips with the outlets perpendicular to the length of the strip are recommended.
- Get a smart strip. These are becoming more common and less expensive. With smart strips, one outlet serves as a master, receiving power all the time. The other outlets do not receive power until the master device is turned on. This is ideal for home entertainment setups.

Purchasing a power strip:

If you are connecting expensive electronics, you may want to consider a surge protector. Here, price is even more important because a cheap surge protector can be worse than

none at all for two reasons. One, they use cheap, small surge fighting components. Two, these components can fail and the strip still will provide power, all without any indication that its protective side is gone.

Like power strips, there are some key factors to consider when buying a surge protector.

- Go for a significant joule (jewel) rating. This is a measure of how much energy it can withstand.
- Cable and internet connection protection. You may want to consider this for your entertainment and computing needs as surges can enter via any wired connection. Be sure the protector is designed to handle a digital television. Otherwise, it can cause pixilation if it's only designed for analog signals.
- Indicator light that shows if protection has burned out.
- The same outlet orientation as previously mentioned.
- Power conditioning feature (for PCs, this is a nice-to-have feature but not a necessity).
- A smart capability as mentioned above.

Power strips and surge protectors are worth the investment when you follow these simple suggestions.

Don't get "burned" by purchasing cheap, inefficient strips and protectors.



May Is National Electrical Safety Month

plug into safety



Never use electrical equipment near water and other liquids.



Never use electrical cords that are frayed or damaged.



Do not overload electrical outlets.



Never use light bulbs that exceed the recommended wattage for any lighting unit or fixture.



Treat all downed power lines as energized and contact your electric cooperative to **report downed power lines**.



While pruning trees or working near overhead power lines, **do not touch** anything that comes into contact with the power line.



Think safety **FIRST!**



Why is my electric bill so high?

If your electric bill seems higher than it used to be, it's time to investigate.

1. Check your history. First, verify that the bill actually is higher. Visit your electric cooperative's web site or ask someone there for help pulling up your bills for the past year. You might be surprised to see that your electricity use fluctuates depending on the season, and that your bill is always higher in the summer.

2. Check your non-electrical activity. Does your high bill reflect a past-due amount or any one-time service fees, like deposits, disconnection fees or returned check fees?

3. Check the weather. Fluctuations in outdoor temperatures can lead your family to turn the air conditioning up a little higher on especially hot days. Most people with air conditioning use more electricity during the hottest summer months than at other times of the year.

4. Check how many days are in the billing cycle. Depending on the number of days in the month and whether the bill comes due on a week-end or holiday, it could cover a couple of extra days some months. That would make the bill slightly higher.

5. Check what's plugged in. If you thought your bill would be lower during a month when your family was gone on vacation part of the time, you might be surprised to realize that your appliances still use substantial electricity when the house is empty. Your refrigerator, landscape irrigator and well pump, for instance, keep running while you're gone unless you have unplugged them. In fact, any appliance that is plugged into the wall will use electricity while you're on vacation, even though nobody is home to use them.

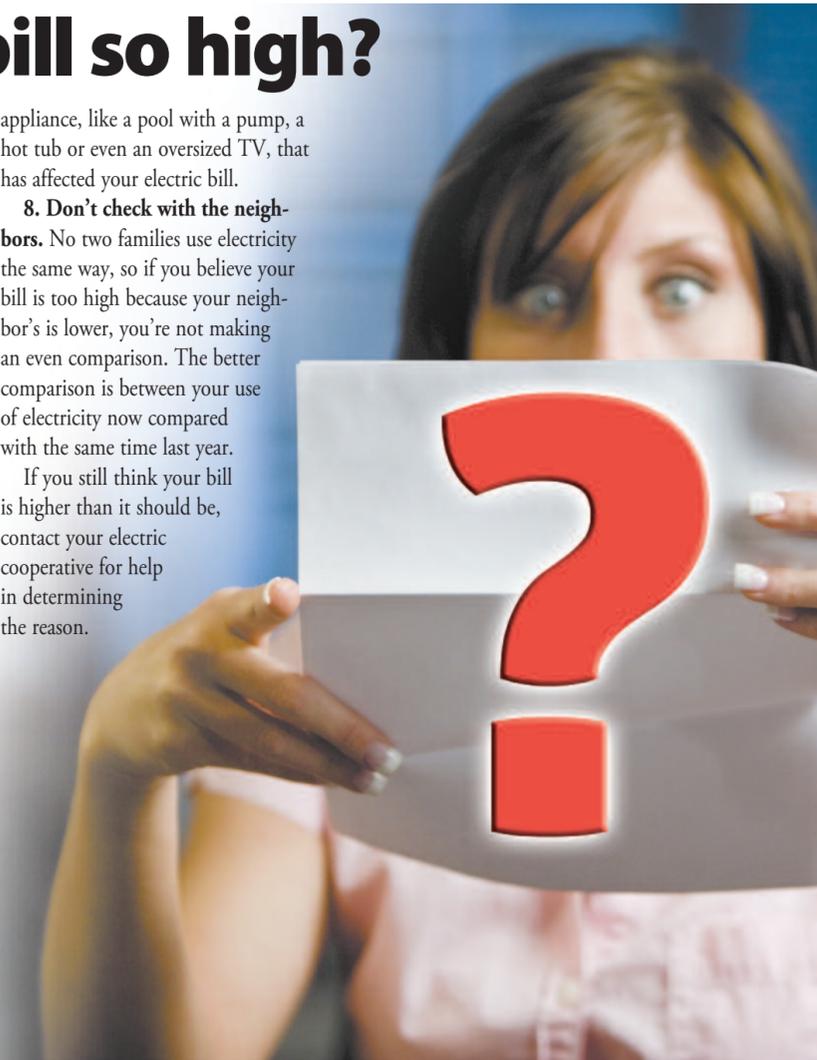
6. Check your equipment. As appliances like refrigerators and water heaters age, they become more inefficient. If your air conditioning and heating system or another large appliance is more than 15 years old, consider replacing it with a more energy-efficient model.

7. Check your lifestyle. If your college-age children are home for the summer, chances are, your electric bill will be a bit higher than it was while they were away. If your grandkids are enjoying their vacation at your house, your bill could go up. If you've had house guests, you've used more electricity. And if you have added a major

appliance, like a pool with a pump, a hot tub or even an oversized TV, that has affected your electric bill.

8. Don't check with the neighbors. No two families use electricity the same way, so if you believe your bill is too high because your neighbor's is lower, you're not making an even comparison. The better comparison is between your use of electricity now compared with the same time last year. If you still think your bill is higher than it should be, contact your electric cooperative for help in determining the reason.

- Like most things in life, saving money on air-conditioning bills is most likely if you have a plan.
- Plan a strategy for keeping your home cool this summer without breaking the bank. Here are six tips:
 - Get a qualified service technician to your house to give a once-over to your central air-conditioning system and any window units you might have. Like any appliance, a well-tuned air conditioner will operate in the most energy-efficient way.
 - Set your thermostat to 78 degrees while you're home, and higher before you leave the house for the day. If you have a programmable thermostat, it will set itself.
 - Turn ceiling fans on when you enter a room and off when you leave. A ceiling fan doesn't cool a room; it moves the air around so anyone in the room will feel cooler. So there's no benefit to running a fan when nobody is around.
 - Notice the outdoor temperature every evening. If it's cool enough, turn the a/c off and open the windows before bedtime.
 - Close your drapes or blinds when it's sunny outside to block the heat, but leave them open on cloudy days to get some natural daylight into your rooms.
 - Avoid cooking in your kitchen on hot, summer days. Instead, grill outdoors, serve cold dishes, order take-out or heat food up in the microwave oven.



We will be closed Monday, May 29 in observance of Memorial Day.

In case of a power outage or emergency, please call 1-866-846-5671. CEPA Dispatcher on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Central Electric wishes you and your family a safe and happy holiday!

MEMORIAL DAY
MAY 29, 2017