

Take Control & Save

A Cooperative Effort for Energy Efficiency

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Saving Energy in the Laundry Room

Find the right washer for you

When shopping for a clothes washer, use the EnergyGuide labels to purchase the most efficient model. The Federal Trade Commission requires a yellow EnergyGuide label on most home appliances that estimates a yearly operating cost, along with estimated electricity or gas usage.

The label also shows the highest and lowest cost estimates of similar appliance models. Energy use for a standard top-loading washer, for example, ranges from 267 kWh per year for the most efficient model to 1818 kWh for the least efficient.

Also look for an ENERGY STAR® logo, either on the EnergyGuide label or the clothes washer. The logo signifies that an appliance meets strict energy-efficiency criteria established by the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.* Most full-sized ENERGY STAR-qualified washers consume 40 percent less energy than standard washers and use about half the water per load.

ENERGY STAR-qualified models extract much more water from the clothes—meaning that time in the dryer will be reduced and take less energy. Most laundry loads can be washed in cold or warm water, significantly reducing the amount of energy used to heat water.

Just as important, look for models with multiple settings for water-level and water-temperature controls. Since up to 90 percent of the energy needed to wash clothes is used to heat water, look for controls that allow settings for smaller loads and cooler water. Remember, however, that one large load uses less energy than two small loads.

Consider a front-loading machine; this type of washer is more efficient and uses less water and detergent, significantly reducing monthly operating costs. Some front-loaders use only 15 gallons of water per cycle, compared to 30 to 40 gallons for top-loading machines. Front-loading machines are also gentler on washable items, as there is no central agitator.

Always use High-Efficiency detergent, as front-loading clothes washers are designed to use only this type of detergent. Using regular detergent in a front-loading washer will create too many suds, leading to decreased washing and rinsing performance. The lowered performance can lead to mechanical problems and foul odors.



Choose an efficient dryer

Energy Guide labels are not required on clothes dryers. The one sure way to save money on dryer energy is to buy an ENERGY STAR-labeled washer that spins out most of the excess moisture. To buy the most efficient dryer, look for energy-efficient features such as an automatic temperature control, a moisture-sensor control, a cool-down cycle, and a no-heat cycle. These features can be found on both gas and electric dryers.

The dryer may have several selections based on type of fabrics being dried; regardless of the number of these options, dryers have either two or three heat settings. Since pilot lights increase annual gas consumption, save money by selecting a dryer with electronic ignition.

Moisture sensors automatically turn the dryer off as soon as the clothes are dry, and typically cut energy use by 10 to 15 percent. With a timer only, the dryer may run longer than necessary. Look for a dryer with an alarm announcing the end of the drying cycle and a post-heat tumbling cycle to prevent wrinkling.



Dryer operation

The most important way to save energy and money with clothes dryers is to shorten the drying time. Set the dryer moisture sensor and automatic temperature control to keep drying time to a minimum and to prevent over-drying. Over-drying not only wastes energy, it also shortens fabric life, causes wrinkles, and generates static.

Remember that the clothes-dryer exhaust removes air from the home and can be a factor in reducing the amount of combustion air available for furnaces and other fuel-burning appliances. A shortage of combustion air can cause backdrafting of dangerous gases into the home, so it's important to ensure an adequate combustion air supply.

Energy-Saving Tips

- Two small loads will consume more energy than one large load; be careful not to overload the dryer, however, since this causes wrinkling and uneven drying.
- Clean the lint screen before each load. Lint restricts air movement, which can mean longer drying times per load.
- Twice a year, disconnect the exhaust hose and clear out the lint. Always use smooth metal ducting for the dryer exhaust. Flexible exhaust hoses increase operation time and trap lint, increasing fire risk. Tape all seams in the metal ducting.
- Check the dryer exhaust vent periodically to make sure it operates properly and doesn't leak. The flapper on the outside should open and close freely; if it remains open, it allows heated air to escape from the house during the winter. Check the flapper once a month and remove lint buildup.
- Always vent dryers outside to prevent moisture damage to the home and to keep laundry contaminants out of the household air.


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Tri-County Electric Cooperative

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16875 US Highway 63 • Lancaster, MO 63548 • (660) 457-3733 • tricityelectric.org

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