

January 2021 | Washington • Idaho

Cold weather and coffee

What happens when your home gets the chills

This time of year, you may have noticed an increase in energy usage on your most recent bill. We're often asked how energy use can increase when no changes have been made to a thermostat. It's a great question and one that can be explained by comparing our homes to a cup of coffee.



During hot summer months, when we take our cup of coffee outside, it remains warm for quite some time. When cold

weather hits, that same cup of coffee cools down rather quickly due to a significant difference in temperature between the coffee and the outdoor air temperature.

Just like our cup of coffee, our homes retain and release heat differently throughout the year. A thermos-style coffee cup with a lid, just like a well-insulated home with minimal air leaks, will do better than a porcelain cup or a leaky and poorly insulated home in cold weather, due to its insulating properties.

The more heat our homes release, the more energy it takes to warm them back up. A cup of coffee can be warmed up in a few seconds. A house, on the other hand, requires more effort from its heating system — and more effort means more energy. Try setting your thermostat at 68 degrees when home and reduce by a few degrees at night or when away. For every degree decreased, you will save on your heating energy usage by 3 percent.

Visit myavista.com/winterbill for additional tips and learn how to save energy and stay comfortable in your home this season.



At home with Lisa: Humidity vases

It happens every year. When the weather gets colder, the skin on my hands begins to chap and crack. It's not the cold that does this. It's the dryness in the air.

Something I learned this week—the humidity of your house contributes to how warm you feel during winter months. When I attended last year's Avista Energy Fair, my goody bag included a small digital gauge. It looked like a thermometer, but it had an extra number on it. It measures the humidity of a room. You can find these on Amazon for under \$5.

I wondered what effect humidity has on your home in the winter and found lots of resources online. I found this blog post (bobvila.com/articles/increase-humidity/) very helpful. When the humidity of a room drops below 30 percent, your skin gets chapped and it feels colder.

You don't have to get a whole humidifier to add moisture to the room. You can boil a pot or kettle of water on your stove as long as you keep an eye on it. Leave the door open when you shower, or if you are a bath person, open the door when you are finished and let the water cool on its own.

Lisa, an Avista customer, bought her 1910 house because she loved the old-world character, some of which doesn't make her house very energy efficient. Lisa is sharing her experience on taking some simple do-it-yourself improvements to inspire others to do the same. You'll find her stories at myavista.com/connect every Tuesday morning.

One creative way to add moisture to a room is to place vases of water on elevated surfaces in a room. You want it high enough so it is away from children or pets. You can add decorative rocks, essential oils, cranberries... whatever you want. I took a vase and added some glow-in-the-dark plastic plants for an aquarium, filled it with water and added some plastic fish. You can also get luminary lanterns with floating candles and place them around your room.

These humidity vases may take a little longer than a humidifier, but if you have more humidity, you can turn your heaters down a bit and still feel comfortable.



Downed power lines

It doesn't happen often but damage from high winds, ice and other issues can bring a power line down. If you ever find a power line that is down on the ground or in a tree or shrub you need to always assume that the power line is still energized or has electricity still flowing through it.

The next steps to take are:

- Stay back at least 50 feet.
- Never touch or attempt to move the line.
- Don't try to use a branch to move the power line as wood does conduct electricity.
- When there's a downed line, always call Avista.

You need to follow those rules even if the line is in contact with someone as the electricity can pass through that person to harm you as well. The line may look harmless or like it is not energized and you may not see sparks or other signs of power, but the ground around a high voltage line can be dangerous. Electricity can travel through dirt or the ground and when it does, it travels in waves much like the ripples a rock makes when you throw it into a pond. If you stand on separate wave rings, electricity may pass through your body. If a downed wire touches a metal object like a car, fence or guardrail it too can become energized, so be aware of your surroundings and make sure to stay at least 50 feet away and call 911 and Avista to notify them of the issue.

For more information, visit myavista.com/safety.



When's the last time you replaced your furnace filter?

Regularly changing your furnace filter can greatly improve the efficiency and extend the life of your furnace. But it's a task most of us tend to forget.

We have a great solution to help you remember to change your furnace filter, even if you've got this down like clockwork and you just want the convenience of doorstep delivery. Join our furnace filter program and we'll send you email reminders every three months. If desired, you can also choose to receive money-saving manufacturer's coupons, or even have new filters conveniently delivered to your door.

There are many great reasons to replace the air filter in your furnace, including creating better operation and extending the life of your furnace, as well as the benefits of reduced energy use and cleaner indoor air quality. You can even save unnecessary expenses that restricted air flow place on your furnace.

Never forget that filter again. Sign up today at myavista.com/changemyfilter.

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