

## Energy Efficient Electronics for College Bound Students



Electronics are important to today's students. They use them for education, entertainment, and daily living. Students build habits in school, so it's an excellent time to develop energy efficiency habits. The Board of Light & Power recommends you consider some of the following electronics for a more energy-efficient school year:

**Smart Power Strips** – These power strips are controlled by a primary electronic device, such as a computer, and all peripheral electronics are controlled by the primary. For example, if you plugged a computer in and then plugged a printer in, the smart strip will shut off power to both the computer and printer when the computer is off.

**Energy Star Products** – Many students purchase computers, stereo systems, and TVs for their dorms. Look for the blue Energy Star label on electronics. Energy Star products can use up to 30 percent less energy than comparable non-Energy Star products.

**Battery Charger** – Remotes, calculators, and other gadgets require batteries. A rechargeable battery set is an efficient way to avoid the hassles of running out of batteries while also helping to keep batteries out of landfills.

**LED/CFLs** – Traditional incandescent light bulbs can use 75 percent more energy than a CFL or LED, and you pay for every extra bit of energy incandescent bulbs use.

**Compact Refrigerator** – If your student plans on taking a refrigerator to school, look for an Energy Star qualified model and consider a compact or micro-refrigerator.

**Drying Rack** – A collapsible drying rack can save students' quarters and hassle. Instead of waiting in the laundry room while their clothes dry, students can dry clothes on a rack in the convenience of their own room or apartment.

Use of energy efficient electronics now can help students build lifestyle habits that will continue to help them well into the future.

Created in 1896, the Board of Light & Power is one of more than 2,000 community-owned electric utilities serving homes and businesses across the United States. We are locally-controlled by a five-member Board of Directors elected by Grand Haven residents with approximately 13,500 customers in the greater Grand Haven area.

Your Board of Directors:

**Jack Smant**, Chairperson

**Gerald Witherell**, Vice Chairperson

**Larry Kieft**, Director

**John Naser**, Director

**Jim VanderMolen**, Director



**PLUGGED IN** is a publication of the Grand Haven Board of Light & Power. Questions and comments may be submitted to our Customer Services Department at:

1700 Eaton Drive  
Grand Haven, MI 49417  
Phone: 616-846-6250  
Fax: 616-846-3114  
Emergency: 616-842-2241  
E-mail: [blpservice@ghblp.org](mailto:blpservice@ghblp.org)  
[www.ghblp.org](http://www.ghblp.org)



# PLUGGED IN

News and Information from your Community-Owned Electric Utility,  
**Grand Haven Board of Light & Power**

## July/August 2014



Photo Credit: Grand Haven Chamber

### Inside:

#### Energy Efficiency:

- Understanding Your Energy Usage

#### Safety Matters:

- Lightning Safety

#### Energy Efficient Electronics for College Bound Students



**GRAND HAVEN  
BOARD OF LIGHT & POWER**

[www.ghblp.org](http://www.ghblp.org)

Community-owned . Locally-controlled . Not-for-Profit . Environmentally Responsible

Community-owned . Locally-controlled . Not-for-Profit . Environmentally Responsible

# ENERGY EFFICIENCY



## Understanding Your Energy Usage

Some consumers do not pay much attention to their electric bills. Once a month they see a running list of numbers, but they only pay attention to the final cost and not the other details. If you want to reduce your costs, the first step is to better understand your energy usage.

Tracking your energy use starts with your billing statement. Go back through your utility bills to better understand your use of electricity. Identify the kilowatt hours (kWh) used each month. In looking at your electrical use over the span of a year, you will be able to identify peaks when more energy was used.

With a better understanding of your energy usage, you can start to discover ways to cut back cost by being more energy efficient. According to the Department of Energy, more than half of your utility bill comes from heating and cooling. You may discover that the peaks in your billing statements coincide with months during which there were greater or more frequent temperature extremes.

To be more energy efficient, turn thermostats down a few degrees in the winter and up in the summer. Dress in layers to stay warm, or use fans to stay cool. You can also save money by adjusting the thermostat when you are away from home. For all types of home cooling systems, you can reduce energy use by increasing the temperature when you are away. However, home heating is different. If your home has a heat pump, the most efficient option is to keep it constantly set to a moderate temperature. For other types of home heating systems, you can save money by adjusting the temperature when you are away from home.

For more precise tracking, consider purchasing a home energy monitor. A home energy monitor supplies real time feedback on how much electricity you are using. The monitor displays the amount of electricity you are using and what it is costing you. You can see your current cost go up and down instantly as you turn items on and off. In-home electricity monitors do not reduce the amount of energy a consumer uses, but they can help you track trends in your energy use. This will help you to identify ways to reduce your use of energy by making you more aware of how much you are spending in a given time on electricity.

To discover more ways you can become more energy efficient, visit [EnergyEdCouncil.org](http://EnergyEdCouncil.org).

## Lightning Safety Continued:

- **Myth:** Structures with metal, or metal on the body (jewelry, cell phones, Mp3 players, watches, etc.), attract lightning. **Fact:** Height, pointy shape, and isolation are the dominant factors controlling where a lightning bolt will strike.
- **Myth:** If trapped outside and lightning is about to strike, I should lie flat on the ground. **Fact:** Lying flat increases your chance of being affected by potentially deadly ground current. If you are caught outside in a thunderstorm, you should keep moving toward a safe shelter.

One good way to stay safe from the threat of lightning is to plan ahead. Listen to the forecast to know if there is potential for severe weather, and make sure you can get to a safe location if a thunderstorm develops. Remember, if you can hear thunder, you are close enough to be struck by lightning. It is a good idea to heed the advice of the National Weather Service, "When thunder roars, go indoors."

# SAFETY MATTERS

## Quick as Lightning, You Could Lose Your Life

Lightning strikes in the United States millions of times each year, and every strike is a potential killer. To keep your family safe, it is important to know what actions to take during a thunderstorm. There are many myths and old wives tales about lightning. Some of them just might get you killed.

There is no safe place from lightning when you are outside. To be as safe as possible you must seek shelter indoors or in an enclosed metal topped vehicle when there is a thunderstorm in the area. A safe indoor shelter is defined as a substantial building with a full roof, walls, and a floor. Unsafe structures include covered patios, open garages, picnic shelters, and tents. A safe vehicle is one that is fully enclosed like a hard-topped car, minivan, truck, etc. Unsafe vehicles include convertibles, motorcycles, golf carts, and any open cab vehicle.



Photo Credit: City of Irving, TX

The National Weather Service separates lightning myth from fact:

- **Myth:** Rubber tires on a car protect you from lightning by insulating you from the ground. **Fact:** Most cars are safe from lightning, but it is the metal roof and metal sides that protect you, NOT the rubber tires. Cars with fiberglass shells offer no protection from lightning. When lightning strikes a vehicle, it goes through the metal frame into the ground.
- **Myth:** A lightning victim is electrified. If you touch them, you will be electrocuted. **Fact:** The human body does not store electricity. It is perfectly safe to touch a lightning victim to give them first aid.
- **Myth:** If outside in a thunderstorm, you should seek shelter under a tree to stay dry. **Fact:** Being underneath a tree is the second leading cause of lightning casualties.