



The Public Utility Commission of Oregon (PUC) often hears from customers who have received higher than normal energy bills during the winter months. If you have received such a bill, your first course of action should be to call your utility service provider or check your account online for information about your bill and usage.

### **Common Reasons Energy Bills Increase**

1. **Colder than normal weather:** Much colder weather has a significant impact on your energy consumption. Even a few degree colder average temperature can mean a significant increase in usage.
2. **Heating Systems:** Since your heating system is the single largest user of energy in most homes, colder than normal weather will have a significant impact on energy consumption. Even if the thermostat is not turned up, the heating system will run more to keep up with the increased heat loss of the home. Homes with heat pumps are particularly susceptible to extreme cold as their efficiency is greatly reduced when temperatures drop below 35 degrees.
3. **Water Heating:** Cold weather also affects the temperature of the water coming into your water heater, leading to higher energy usage, as the water heater must work harder to heat the water.
4. **Home All Day:** During extreme weather, people often stay indoors. This will lead to increased energy use for heating systems, water heating, electronics usage, lighting, etc.
5. **Extra Days in Billing Period\*:** Sometimes due to severe weather, meter readers can be delayed. This can result in bills that cover a longer billing period than normal.
6. **Estimated Bills\*:** In some areas, some meters are unable to be read due to weather, so the utility is allowed to estimate those bills. If your bill is estimated, the utility is required to clearly note this on your bill. Estimates do not necessarily reflect actual usage. If a bill is estimated higher than actual usage, this will be corrected once the meter is able to be read.
  - \* As more smart meters are installed throughout the state, these issues should be reduced as meter readers are not needed to obtain readings.
7. **Prior Arrears:** If customers did not pay their bill in full the prior month, there will be a carry-over amount due, which would make the next bill higher.

### **Bill Payment Assistance**

If unable to pay your bill in full, contact your utility service provider to make payment arrangements.

### **Energy and Money Saving Tips**

[View energy conservation tips](#)

### **Cash Incentives and Services**

If you heat your home with electricity or natural gas from Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural, Cascade Natural, or Avista, contact Energy Trust of Oregon at 1.866.368.7878 to learn about available cash incentives and services.

To complete a no-cost online evaluation of your home's energy usage, visit [www.energytrust.org/residential/evaluate-your-home/](http://www.energytrust.org/residential/evaluate-your-home/).

Customers of Idaho Power may call their utility to request similar energy conservation assistance.