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5 minutes!

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Three Smart Home Technologies to Help You Save Energy

By Abby Berry

Smart technologies make our homes more comfortable, convenient and energy efficient. By connecting your home Wi-Fi network, smart devices automate everyday tasks like lighting, heating, cooling and home security—they can even communicate with other smart devices in the home.

While not all smart home products are specifically designed with energy savings in mind, there are several smart technologies that can help you lower home energy use. Here are the top three smart home devices to help you save.

Smart Thermostats

Smart or not, your thermostat is the most effective tool for controlling energy use, as heating and cooling typically account for the largest portion of energy bills. Smart thermostats allow you to adjust the indoor temperature through an app, giving you full control from anywhere on the go. Many smart thermostats include learning capabilities and will adjust the thermostat based on previous behavior and patterns.

According to the Department of Energy, smart thermostats can reduce heating and cooling bills by more than 8% annually, and with models as low as \$65, they typically pay for themselves in one year.

Smart Lighting

Smart LED bulbs use less electricity than traditional bulbs and can be scheduled or turned off (or on) remotely through a smart phone app. Smart bulbs are available in a range of shapes, brightness levels, colors and more, so shop for the products that work best for your home lighting needs.

Many smart bulbs include motion sensors that turn on or off based on room activity, further optimizing home energy use. If you're new to smart lighting, try a home starter kit. Prices for kits range

from \$70 to \$300+ depending on how many bulbs you need.

Smart Plugs

Smart plugs are inexpensive gadgets that can help you save energy. Many electronic devices consume power even when they are turned off (known as “phantom load”), which can take a toll



Photo Credit: Abby Berry

on your energy bills. Smart plugs are simply plugged into an electrical outlet and connected to your Wi-Fi network. When set up, the smart plug can cut power (or return power) to non-smart devices, like coffee makers, phone chargers and other items that draw phantom load.

Many smart plugs can be paired with popular smart hubs, like Alexa or Google Nest, or controlled through the plug's associated app. Smart plugs are simple to use and a set of four can be purchased for as little as \$25.

If you're looking for new ways to save energy, try these budget-friendly, convenient smart home technologies.

Abby Berry writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the national trade association representing nearly 900 local electric cooperatives. From growing suburbs to remote farming communities, electric co-ops serve as engines of economic development for 42 million Americans across 56% of the nation's landscape.

Be Prepared For Hurricane Season

We know you've heard it before — but it's worth repeating. BE PREPARED for Hurricane Season. We'll keep talking about it because your safety — and the safety of our communities — matters deeply to us. It only takes one storm to change everything. Now is the time to prepare.




Develop your family emergency plan, stock up on essential supplies, and stay informed. *Always Stay Safe. Always be Storm Ready.* Here's what you can do to prepare:

- **Assess your home:**
Identify potential vulnerabilities like storm surge,

flooding, and wind damage.

- **Gather supplies:**
Stock up on essential items like water, food, first-aid supplies, and a battery-powered or hand-crank radio.
- **Review your insurance:**
Make sure your property insurance covers hurricane damage and consider flood insurance if you live in a flood-prone area.
- **Plan your evacuation route:**
Know where you'll go if you need to evacuate and familiarize yourself with local emergency routes.
- **Create a disaster plan:**
Develop a family plan that includes how you'll communicate and where you'll go if you need to leave.
- **Keep important documents safe:**
Store copies of essential papers in a waterproof container or digital format.

 In the event of an power outage the consumer with special medical needs will need to secure a generator, re-locate or otherwise secure accommodations for medical problems that might occur due to the loss of electrical power.



TIPS TO AVOID ENERGY SCAMS

Delete deceptive emails. If you receive an email that appears to be from your electric utility but you are unsure about it, delete it. Never click on a link, open an attachment or send a reply to an untrusted source. When in doubt, contact your utility directly to report suspected email scams.

Source: Utilities United Against Scams





SCHOOL BUS SAFETY TIPS

School buses are among the safest vehicles on the road — but the greatest risk comes when children are getting on or off the bus. **Whether you're a driver, parent or student, knowing these safety tips will help keep everyone safe.**

FOR DRIVERS:

- **Slow down:** Reduce speed in school zones and near bus stops.
- **Keep your distance:** Stay back at least 10 feet from a school bus — this is the most dangerous area for children.
- **Know the signals:**
 - Yellow flashing lights: bus is preparing to stop. Slow down.
 - Red flashing lights + stop arm: bus is loading/unloading — stop and wait until the bus moves again.
 - Never pass a stopped bus on an undivided road — it's illegal in most states.
- **Stay alert:** Watch for kids who may unexpectedly enter the road, especially near bus stops.
- **Respect the zone:** When flashers are blinking in a school zone, stop for pedestrians at crosswalks and take extra care to look for children near playgrounds, parks and residential areas.

FOR PARENTS:

Teach your child to arrive at the bus stop at least 5 minutes early, and how to play it **SAFE**:

- **Stay back at least 10 feet**, or five giant steps, from the curb.
- **Always wait for the bus to stop** and the driver to signal before boarding.
- **Face forward** and buckle up if seat belts are available.
- **Exit carefully**, look both ways and cross in front of the bus — never behind. Make eye contact with the driver before crossing.

As students head back to school, remember: **a moment of caution can prevent a lifetime of regret.**

Learn more:

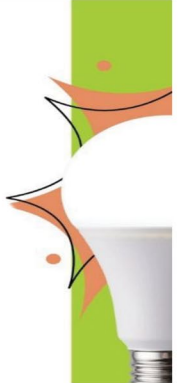
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Serving in 14 Southwest Georgia Counties...

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIP OF THE MONTH

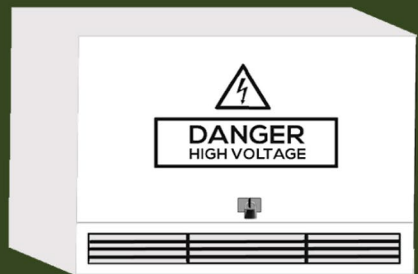
Replace your cooling system's filter regularly to maintain strong airflow and boost energy efficiency. A clean filter means your system doesn't have to work as hard, saving energy and lowering your utility bills. Factors like allergies and pets in the home can impact how often filters should be replaced. Check the filter every month and replace it as needed. Changing filters regularly also reduces wear and tear on your cooling system, helping extend the life of the unit.

Source: energy.gov



Safety Tip

Keep plants and fences away from green transformer boxes — especially the padlocked side. Utility crews need at least 10 feet in front and 4 feet on the sides to work safely and quickly during outages. Keep a clear path to the transformer — even if it's in your yard, it's technically on an easement, and they still need access!



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Attention Farmers Just a reminder...

Time Of Use (TOU) rates for irrigation systems begins on June 1. The TOU kWh cost is based on the time of day in which it is used. The rate will distinguish between ON-PEAK and OFF-PEAK usage. *TOU rates apply from June 1 through September 30. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at 229-336-5221 or 1-800-479-6034.



Note: If you move or no longer have electric service with Mitchell EMC, it is important that members keep their address current, so that future disbursements can be properly mailed. Capital credits are reserved for members even if they move out of the Mitchell EMC service area. Mitchell EMC will make a diligent effort to send a check by mail.

Statement of Equal Employment Opportunity

All applications for employment shall be considered and hired on the basis of merit, without regard to race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), age, national origin, disability, genetic information, or past or present military status. The employment practices shall ensure equal treatment of all employees, without discrimination as to promotion, discharge, rates of pay, fringe benefits, job training, classification, referral, and other aspects of employment, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, disability, age, genetic information, or past or present military status. M/F/V/DV/D



Picture Credit: thecozycook.com/taco-spaghetti/

Taco Spaghetti

Ingredients

2 lbs. ground beef
1 small onion, chopped
1 can Rotel tomatoes
3 cups of water
8 oz. spaghetti noodles
8 oz. cheese, shredded

Directions

Brown ground beef with chopped onion. Drain well. Return it to the pan. Add Rotel, water and spaghetti. Bring to boil. When it starts boiling, reduce to simmer and cover. Cook for about 20 minutes. When liquid is absorbed and noodles are done, stir in cheese and serve.

Submitted By:

Evelyn Castleberry, Worth County

Share & Win!

Send us your favorite quick and easy dinner recipes. If your recipe is chosen for print, you can

win a \$25 credit

on your next Mitchell EMC bill.

Send recipes to: Heather Greene,
P.O. Box 409, Camilla, GA 31730 or email to
heather.greene@mitchellemc.com.