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# Monitoring Home Energy Usage



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I've always wondered how much energy turning off a light switch really shaves off my power bill.

A good way to gauge what your home is consuming is with Blue Line's PowerCost Monitor. It informs you in real time exactly how much electricity your household is using. It came out earlier this year, and I wouldn't be surprised if it was a hot seller for Christmas. My husband and I bought it as an early Christmas present for our house.

To set yourself up, first you need to clamp a wireless sensor to your home's power meter (powered by two AA batteries). This sensor then transmits information to a portable wireless receiver that you keep with you in the house (also powered by two AA batteries). The receiver displays your energy usage on an easy-to-read LCD screen. When you turn something on or off, it takes about 30 seconds for it to register on your receiver. You can program various electricity rates on it for extreme accuracy, including single (flat) rates, tiered rates and time-based rates.

We mounted our receiver on the kitchen wall and the kilowatt hours (kWh) usage are easy to read in big numbers at the top. The first night it was installed we had fun turning on and off different lights and devices in the house to see what sucked up the most power. The very first thing we tried out was the Christmas tree. Surprisingly this was one of the most energy-consuming lights in the house, using 0.5 kWh. In comparison, the kitchen light and the bedroom both use 0.1 kWh.

Additionally, I noticed my house's baseline averages at about 1.0 kWh during the day, and 2.0 kWh at night with the basic lights running (kitchen, living room and the outside patio). When the central air conditioner kicks in, it then shoots up to 5.1 kWh (day) and 6.1 kWh (night), but since it's been cooler these days, it hasn't kicked on that often. To my surprise, the washer (0.8 kWh) uses more power than the dryer (0.6 kWh) - neither are Energy Star since they're a little older.

The bottom line is the PowerCost Monitor is a cheap, effective and fun way to help you know what your home is doing. Last week it was even named one of *EcoHome Magazine's* Top 20 Reader-Requested Green Products for 2009.

You can find it at [Smarthome.com](#) for \$99.93 (free shipping on orders more than \$200) or [Amazon.com](#) for \$109.99 (free shipping).



Photo courtesy of Blue Line