

# Want To Track Your Power Costs In Real Time?

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**CENTRAL FLORIDA** -- Summer is almost here and, for many, electric rates have never been higher. But what if you didn't have to wait for your monthly power bill to know how much it's going to cost you? WFTV found out there's already technology to track power costs in real time, but the power companies aren't ready to make it available to everyone.

Allen Heffler may have found the secret to lower power bills. He agreed to try out the "power cost monitor." With a signal from his meter to a display unit inside, he can see how much he's spending moment by moment.

Heffler could have used that this winter when his bill jumped nearly \$200.

"You walk out to the mailbox and there's a bill from the electric company. You open it up and all of a sudden you have a heart attack," he said.

It took about an hour to set up the \$120 monitor. There are a growing number of models on the market and they range in price. They all help customers save by teaching and reminding them to conserve. Manufacturers claim customers can save 15 to 20 percent. An independent study suggests the number might be more like five to 15 percent.

Of course, the value of monitors is the real time feedback. One house WFTV went to with the monitor was using about 12 cents per hour; after turning on the microwave, the dryer and a few more lights, the cost jumped to 33 cents per hour, or almost four kilowatts.

Progress Energy showed WFTV a model that looks like an oversized iPhone, but the power companies won't give them to all of their customers anytime soon.

"If the technology is there now, why not make it available?" WFTV reporter Eric Rasmussen asked Progress Energy spokesperson Tim Lejedal.

"Well, because it's not cost effective yet," he said.

Progress Energy, Orlando Utilities Commission and Florida Power and Light all say they're studying the possibility of giving power monitors to customers, because less energy use means less need to build new plants.

Heffler is just focused on next month's bill to avoid another electric shock at the mailbox.

"Oh, I'm going to put it in my shirt pocket," he said.

"You want to know all the time, Rasmussen asked him.

"You got that right."

WFTV checked back with Heffler on Tuesday and he said the power monitor has saved him more than \$100 since WFTV asked him to try it out just 43 days ago.

Currently, the monitoring units are mostly only available online.

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