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Reducing your power bill with Microsoft's Hohm

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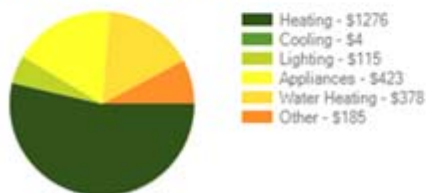
Summary of Potential Savings

Thank you for using our beta service. You can use the following energy report to guide you in your home energy upgrades and repairs. You may want to consult a professional before implementing some of the recommendations. As with any recommendations product, Hohm will improve as more people use our beta.

Your average annual energy costs are **\$2,382**. This includes your electricity and gas consumption, but may not include auxiliary energy usage such as propane tanks and generators.

Energy Cost Breakdown and Usage

Your Estimated Energy Costs



For a lot of people, the electricity bill is an unwanted piece of paper printed with angular graphs and big dollar signs, but with the rising cost of power in today's energy-conscious society it's becoming more important to understand exactly what all those lines and numbers mean. Microsoft's Hohm website aims to make sense of the jargon by providing personalized data on consumers' home energy consumption, and offering recommendations on how to save energy and reduce those bills.

Microsoft Hohm (a tidy amalgamation of the words “home” and “ohm” – the measurement unit for electrical resistance) has taken a three-prong approach:

- 1. A free personalized energy report based on your home usage
- 2. An overall Hohm score allowing you to compare yourself against the state/zip average or your neighbors
- 3. A monitor to track your live usage minute-by-minute, helping you to understand the effect of appliances and habits in real-time.

The site also offers tips for reducing energy usage, a FAQ, a forum and a blog about other eco-conscious ideas.

According to the site, the average US home energy cost is US\$2,718 per year, and the average Hohm score is 61 (Hohm scoring is 1–100 – the higher the better). This writer doesn't have a US address to test Microsoft Hohm, so perhaps predictably I tapped in the

White House address, and here's how Obama's energy bill stacks up: the White House has a Hohm score of 63, which is lower than the national average but higher than other homes in the District of Columbia, that have a respectable average Hohm score of 68.

The cost of powering the White House is US\$4,119, roughly 0.5 times the national average, but only \$600 more than the DC average of \$3,404 – not bad, considering the round-the-clock work that gets done there. Furthermore, the site has a breakdown for what percentage of power is used for what (heating, cooling, appliances etc), the cost of each, and suggestions for how to reduce those figures. I'm sure Obama will be pleased to know he could save \$1,513 per year by sealing cracks and heating ducts, and buying an energy-efficient water pump.

In fact, Hohm cannot provide the *exact* cost and score for a house without specific details provided by the owner. Hohm bases the calculations instead on the location of a home, which determines numerous averages including what year a house was built, the type of heating system, and general appliance data. It is up to the individual consumer to fill in more specific details, and Microsoft Hohm says it uses advanced analytics licensed from [Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory](#) and the [Department of Energy](#) to create ideas for energy-saving based on specific household circumstances.

Home Recommendations Energy Data Community

ways to save energy | energy report | library

Ways To Save Energy

Here are **13** suggestions to improve your home's energy efficiency based on your current home profile which is **10%** complete. Hohm's recommendations will be more accurate when you complete your home profile. You can add items to your "to do" list, mark items as completed, or take an item off the list if it is not applicable to your home. Additionally, you can select views from one of the three lists. As with any recommendations product, Hohm will improve as more people use our beta.

Show recommendations: for your home

Show the best ways to use: -select an amount-

Show the best ways to save: -select an amount-

Recommendations For Your Home

| done | description | DIY cost* | annual savings* | annual benefit* | action | note |
|--------------------------|---|---------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-------------|------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Have a professional seal your home's air leaks and reduce leakage by 40 percent | \$400-\$1,200 | \$337 | 3,193lbs. CO ₂ | recommended | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Install and program a programmable thermostat | \$30-\$190 | \$186 | 1,752lbs. CO ₂ | recommended | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Have your ducts professionally sealed | \$200-\$600 | \$186 | 1,752lbs. CO ₂ | recommended | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | When replacing your oil furnace, choose an Energy Star-labeled model with an AFUE equal to 90 percent | \$700-\$1,200 | \$133 | 1,263lbs. CO ₂ | recommended | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescents | \$72-\$306 | \$95 | 356lbs. CO ₂ | recommended | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Insulate the perimeter edge of slab foundation | \$359-\$513 | \$85 | 810lbs. CO ₂ | recommended | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | When replacing siding, add external insulating sheathing beneath the siding | \$433-\$810 | \$52 | 494lbs. CO ₂ | recommended | |

Once details have been input regarding home attributes such as size, systems and specific appliances, and an accurate Hohm score has been calculated, consumers can then "spy" on their neighbors and look up other addresses with which to compare their score. One hopes this will help to drive a downward turn in energy use as neighbors compete to "keep up", or in this case "keep down with the Joneses," though there is a choice to opt out of information sharing.

Home Recommendations Energy Data Community

my hohm center | home profile | my news | my account

My Hohm Center

How does your energy usage compare to others in your area?

You can either connect to your energy provider or use your statements to manually enter your usage data. Find out how you are doing compared to others in your area.

[Get Your Energy Data »](#)

| Month | 2009 | 2010 |
|-------|-------|--------|
| Mar | ~\$95 | ~\$100 |
| Feb | ~\$90 | ~\$95 |
| Jan | ~\$95 | ~\$90 |

Your Annual Energy Usage Breakdown*

| Category | Amount |
|---------------|--------|
| Heating | \$2321 |
| Cooling | \$4 |
| Lighting | \$115 |
| Appliances | \$423 |
| Water Heating | \$378 |
| Other | \$185 |

[How is this calculated?](#)

Average Annual Energy Costs in Your Area

| Category | Amount |
|--------------|---------|
| Average Home | \$1,092 |
| Your Home* | \$3,427 |

[Get Your Energy Data](#)

Top Ways to Save

Configure your computer display to use low power modes when not in use
savings*: \$45/yr

News

[11 Myths about Compact Fluorescents](#)

[8 Cheap Ways to Make Your Home More Energy-efficient](#)

Finally, [Microsoft Hohm](#) has also teamed up with [Blue Line Innovations](#) to create the [Powercost Monitor](#) and [Powercost Monitor WiFi](#), which will send live information to a PC or laptop showing real-time energy consumption of both electricity and natural gas. The software also shows charts, breakdowns and statements to help the consumer keep track of the information over time, which will help their understanding of how appliances, infrastructure and habits are impacting the power bill. This takes the legwork out of manually entering the data from energy bills. Plus, they claim it can reduce power use by up to 18 percent, and both products can be bought from retailers in the US and Canada.



The Powercost Monitor goes into competition with a number of other products on the market ([handily reviewed by us for you](#)) though the Hohm website itself it is currently in a beta phase and will no doubt become more accurate as users input more details, and more refined with feedback and suggestions. There are no dates yet for when it will be available in other countries, but Microsoft hopes to expand it in due time.