

What Causes High Meter Readings?

What do you do if you see an increase in your kWh usage on your electric billing statement? We suggest that you call Nushagak Electric and Telephone Cooperative, Inc. (NETC) and speak with our Customer Care Staff. Our staff can suggest potential areas in your home that may be responsible for the increase in your kWh usage.

Following are a few potential sources that may create a variance on your electric billing statement:

- **Lifestyle:** The size of your household has increased or you have had guests stay for an extended period. You added features to your home that require additional electricity, such as a whirlpool or hot tub. Hobbies that include the use of power tools, ovens and other high electrical resistance tools or appliances are being used.
- **Lighting, refrigeration, appliances and cooking:** These account for approximately 56% of the average total energy usage in the normal household. Using the computer, stove, hot water, hair dryer or washing machine and clothes dryer for extended periods of time will increase your kWh usage. During winter months, use of lighting in your home increases. The location of refrigerators and freezers is very important. Never place a refrigerator or freezer in direct sunlight or in an unfinished space such as a breezeway, garage or out-building. The refrigerator or freezer will have to work harder to overcome the excessive heat in the spring, summer and fall. Be sure that refrigerators and freezers have adequate ventilation.
- **Equipment maintenance:** The average 50-gallon electric water heater runs about 3 hours per day every day, and uses 410 kWh per month. However, during cold winter months, heat loss from the tank and colder water flowing into the tank can result in higher usage. An insulation jacket can make a difference. Water heaters can also be overworked if the thermostat is set too high or not working properly. It is important to clean or replace the condenser, coils or filters on your appliances regularly. You may need to replace the appliance itself. Many times old electrical wiring will have loose connections, resulting in increased electrical usage and creating potential safety hazards.
- **Seasons:** The additional heating or cooling load will cause an increase in electric usage. Heating and cooling processes account for approximately 44% of the total energy usage of the normal household. Electrical inefficiencies can also be traced to space heaters, improper use of extension cords, damaged cords, faulty wiring, or lightning damage. Electric water-pressure pumps will run overtime if there are underground water leaks or pressure tank problems. The use of electric fireplaces, livestock heaters or vehicle block heaters in the winter can dramatically increase your energy consumption. Running a dehumidifier or watering lawns, gardens and animals in the summer months will increase your energy usage.
- **Weather:** Lightning may have damaged the well pump, sump pump or appliance, increasing the running time of the pump or appliance. If underground wiring or insulation is damaged, an increase in electrical usage may occur when the ground is saturated with moisture.

- **Hidden users:** Keep an eye out for other hidden users of electricity in your home that you have added in the past month or the past year. Think of whether you had house guests using more hot water, a construction project, or other out-of-the-ordinary activity that may have bumped up your usage for that month. Has there been any underground excavation recently? If you have underground wiring, the electric wires may have been nicked, resulting in a direct short.

Once you have located the source of your problem, you may need to call an independent electrician for assistance in resolving the issue. For further information on ways to reduce your electric bill, go to the US Department of Energy at www.eere.energy.gov.