Living With Electric Baseboard Heat

Did you know that electric baseboard heat uses 250 watts for every foot of heater? That can add up quickly and can produce some high electric bills in the winter if these heaters are not controlled properly.

What’s the best way to manage electric heat so you can be comfortable without high bills? The best rule of thumb is to follow the 50-degree rule: whenever you’re not home, you can set thermostats to 50 degrees in rooms with plumbing. For rooms without plumbing in the walls, you can turn thermostats completely off and close the doors to those areas. But it’s important to know where your plumbing lines run, and if you’re not sure, go with 50 degrees. Heating the smallest volume of space for the shortest amount of time possible is the best way to minimize usage from electric heat.

Consider programming your thermostats to a lower set point while you sleep, maybe not down to 50 degrees but even a few degrees of adjustment will provide you with some additional savings. When you’re home and awake, set thermostats at whatever temperature is comfortable for you.

It’s also important to note that older thermostats are often not calibrated properly. If you set your thermostat to 60 degrees and it feels a lot warmer than that in the room, chances are the thermostat is not calibrated correctly. Mis-calibrated thermostats can cause you a lot of unnecessary extra energy use and lead to higher bills. We recommend replacing older thermostats with line voltage style (rated for electric heat) programmable thermostats. There are many brands and models available, and some can even be controlled remotely via your phone (Mysa, Honeywell, Sinope, Stelpro and more). Choose a model that has settings that fit your lifestyle best. Holy Cross Energy offers rebates for programmable thermostats for electric heat – 50% of the cost up to $50 each, for up to 8 thermostats per account. <https://www.holycross.com/residential-rebates/>. Thermostats can also be purchased through our online store with instant rebates available: <https://hcestore.com/>

An alternative to electric baseboard heat is an air source heat pump. The cost to operate these systems can be significantly less than electric baseboard heat, similar to that of natural gas forced air systems. Heat pumps move heat from the air outside your home into your home in winter. These units can also provide efficient air conditioning in the summer months by simply reversing to move the heat from your home to the outside. The technology of today’s heat pumps has improved greatly and cold climate rated heat pumps can work well to heat homes in our climate even in the coldest winter months. To learn more about heat pumps, click here: <https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/heat-and-cool/heat-pump-systems>. Holy Cross offers rebates for certain models of heat pumps. (See rebates link above.)

Questions? Contact one of our Energy Advisors at 970-947-5473 or email us at rebates@holycross.com.