

Utility Tips for Small Businesses

As a small business owner, you know the importance of managing expenses to boost the bottom line. Utility services including electric, natural gas, and telephone are essential to running a business, but they do not have to break your budget.

By understanding your utility services and implementing conservation habits, you can reduce energy waste and develop energy savings and solutions. Here are a few tips to help manage your business utility costs.

- **Pay attention to your bills.** Reading and understanding your bills can help you detect problems early on. If you receive a bill that seems too low or too high, contact your utility company. It may be a sign of a faulty electric or natural gas meter, and getting the problem fixed can save you from overpaying or paying too little over a long period of time.
- **Understand the charges.** When you get a telephone bill, check to make sure you are being charged for the correct number of telephone lines and other services. If you see a charge for a service you did not sign up for, contact the telephone company. It may be a sign of slamming or cramming on your telephone account.
- **Know your energy usage.** Conducting a simple energy audit can help you find ways to conserve energy and discover places where you may be wasting energy. You can find a company to conduct an energy audit for you, or look for tools online to help you do the audit yourself.
- **Control the temperature.** Lowering your thermostat in the winter and keeping the air conditioning at a reasonable temperature in the summer can result in a significant savings on your heating and cooling bills. Having an efficient heating and cooling system will also ensure you are using your electricity and natural gas most efficiently.
- **Look for energy efficient appliances and equipment.** Many large and small appliances have models available that are ENERGY STAR approved for energy efficiency. Although they may cost a little more, you will save on energy costs over time. You can also replace incandescent lighting with ENERGY STAR compact fluorescent light bulbs to increase the efficiency and the life of the lighting for your business.
- **Research financial opportunities for energy efficiency investments.** There are a variety of state and federal loan and grant programs to give businesses incentives to install energy efficient and renewable energy technologies.

By monitoring your utility bills and practicing energy conservation habits, you can make the best use of your business energy dollars. The PUCO offers a variety of information to help you understand your bills and conserve energy. For more information, contact the PUCO at (800) 686-PUCO (7826).