

Managing Our Electricity Usage

What if you could reduce your summer power bills by 5 % without cranking up your thermostat and being uncomfortable? Westminster's "Manage the Load" is a program designed to save you money by better managing the energy used during the peak periods on hot summer days.

You have probably heard the phrase "peak demand period." Peak demand is when the need for electricity is at its maximum. In our area peak demand occurs in summer when temperatures are at their highest, usually between 12 pm and 7pm, Monday thru Friday, June through September.

And you have probably heard power companies say, "Turn up your A/C thermostat during peak demand hours to help us reduce our usage." Why? Because when the days get hotter, power companies have to buy extra power from other providers at higher rates to keep your house cool during those blistering summer afternoons

"Managing the Load" in Westminster allows us to offer a "Good Neighbor Rate" a reduction of 5% on the usage rate. It involves installing a small device on your central air conditioning system that functions similarly to your thermostat. When usage of electricity approaches peak demand levels, the utility, Piedmont Municipal Power Agency, broadcasts a radio signal to the device that will allow the city to cycle your system's compressor (NOT the indoor circulating fan) to run for 23.5 minutes and be off 7.5 minutes, but only during the peak demand period. This device, in some cases installed by service professionals, and city employees in others, does not affect the comfort level, the warranty, or the life expectancy of the unit. Your home remains cool and comfortable, the City reduces the amount of power purchased at the most expensive rates, and you benefit by having the "good neighbor" rate on your electric account.

Similar programs have been adopted by hundreds of utilities serving more than 13 million consumers and 250,000 commercial customers, mostly in southern and western states. In a normal peak season, the device will only be activated a total of eight to ten hours. By helping the City reduce its overall peak demand on these days, we help keep electricity costs low all year long. A portion of Westminster's power purchase rate is demand based and a lower demand can mean lower purchase rates for the Westminster Electric Utility.