

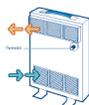
ENERGY EXTRA

The Grand Valley's Energy Newsletter

Cut Your Heating Bill in Half!

Did this headline catch your attention? That is what retailers are hoping to do with phrases and headlines similar to this one. While these claims do have some truth to them, they are also very misleading. The truth in the statement is not based on the quality of the heater, but rather your use of the heater and your home heating system.

Small space heaters are typically used when the main heating system is inadequate or too expensive to operate. They are also used to boost room temperatures for individuals who are sensitive to cold. While these are the intended and practical uses for portable heaters, they should not be used to heat your whole house.

 Most space heaters rely on convection (the circulation of air in a room) to heat a room, while some rely on radiant heating; that is, they emit infrared radiation that directly heats up objects and people that are within their line of sight. Radiant heaters are a more efficient choice when occupying a room for only a couple of hours, if you can remain within the line of sight of the heater. A convection heater may be used efficiently for smaller rooms that can be sealed off from the rest of the house (bathrooms, back bedrooms, etc.).



If you are considering using one of these types of heaters, you must first realize the truth of using portable heaters. First, any appliance (portable heater) that you have to plug in will increase your electric bill. The claims made by most retailers is that it will cost you as little as \$1 a day. Well, while this claim may be partially true, the fine print reveals the true cost. Generally these advertisements use a lower cost per kWh (usually around 7 cents). Grand Valley Power's cost per kWh is 10.93 cents. Secondly, the hours per day that the unit is running will greatly influence the cost that is added to your electric bill. If your house is not well insulated or has large open rooms, chances are that the portable heater will run more often which will dramatically increase your bill. In the advertisements, the low cost is usually based on a run time of 6 hours per day; when in reality, the run time for portable heaters is usually at least 12 hours per day. Finally, the claim says that you can lower your heating bill. This can only be accomplished if you can lower the setting on your thermostat for your whole house heating system. If you don't lower your thermostat and use a portable heater, you are actually doubling your heating bill.

While we are the electric company and we do provide you with safe reliable electricity, we don't like to see inefficient uses of electricity that cost more money. A comparison of heating fuel costs that compares natural gas, electric, and propane breaks down in the following way: \$21 per million BTU for natural gas, \$36 per million BTU for electricity, and \$30-40 per million BTU for propane (depending on delivery charges). As you can see, it is cheaper to heat your whole house with natural gas, but savings can be realized when you use supplemental heat in a proper way.

"Buyer beware", while this phrase is a good guide to live by; we would like it to be your guide as you enter this winter season. If you are considering using or purchasing a portable heater this year and it sounds too good to be true, feel free to call Grand Valley Power's Energy Services Administrator, Derek Elder, at 623-8580 and he will give you an estimate of the cost to run the heater.



Brought to you by:

Derek Elder
Energy Services
Administrator
Grand Valley Power



