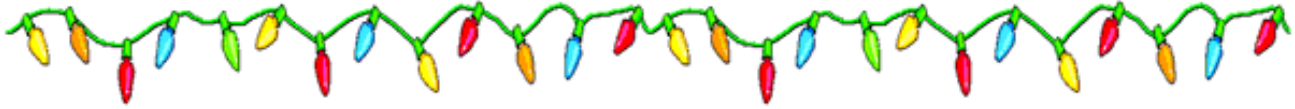


Holiday time energy-saving tips



making holiday lights both festive and frugal

The bright news this holiday season is that Californians can turn on their holiday lights whenever they wish without worrying about an electricity shortage.

That wasn't the case two years ago, when local utilities and State officials urged everyone to use electricity sparingly, and to wait until after 7 p.m. to turn on their lighting displays.

Bright, twinkling lights - both inside and outside the house - are one of the joys and traditions of the season, but in California they consume nearly 1,000 megawatts of electricity. Fortunately, since the energy crisis that began in the winter of 2000, 4,251 megawatts of electricity have come on line from new power plants licensed by the California Energy Commission - enough electricity to power approximately 4.2 million average-sized California homes. In addition, California has signed long-term power contracts that assure an adequate supply of electricity.

But while there is plenty of power to go around this season, those festive little lights can still turn a once jubilant reveler into a bitter Ebenezer Scrooge when the old electricity bill rolls in. To avoid a "Bah humbug!" attitude come January, take an energy efficient look at the bulbs you're stringing on your trees and on the eaves of your home.

Did you know that those large, traditional colored bulbs you unpack year after year could be costing you a bundle? While most C7 or C9 lights use 5 to 7 watts per bulb, some of the older strings use up to 10 watts per bulb!

Consider buying new miniature lights, which use about 70 percent less energy and last much longer than the larger bulbs. If you prefer the brilliance of the larger lights, switch to 5-watt bulbs, which use about 30 percent less energy than 7- to 10-watt bulbs. Although the new bulbs will cost money initially, you will see energy savings immediately.

Would you like to be the first in your neighborhood to try something new and different? Ask your lighting supplier for LED holiday bulbs, or look for them on the Internet. Now available in green, yellow, red, white and blue. They're shatterproof, shock resistant, safe to touch and won't burn your children's hands! They also present no fire hazard, save up to 85 percent of your energy costs, and are long lasting.

