

SAVING MONEY ON YOUR UTILITY BILLS

GEORGIA WATCH – 2024

www.georgiawatch.org



Who is Georgia Watch?

- ▶ Work diligently to make Georgia a model for consumer protection.
- ▶ Engage consumers through outreach and education.
- ▶ Serve as a trusted resource for elected officials, the public, and the media.
- ▶ Keep a watchful eye on legislation that affects consumers.
- ▶ Offer a toll-free Consumer Hotline:
1-866-33-WATCH

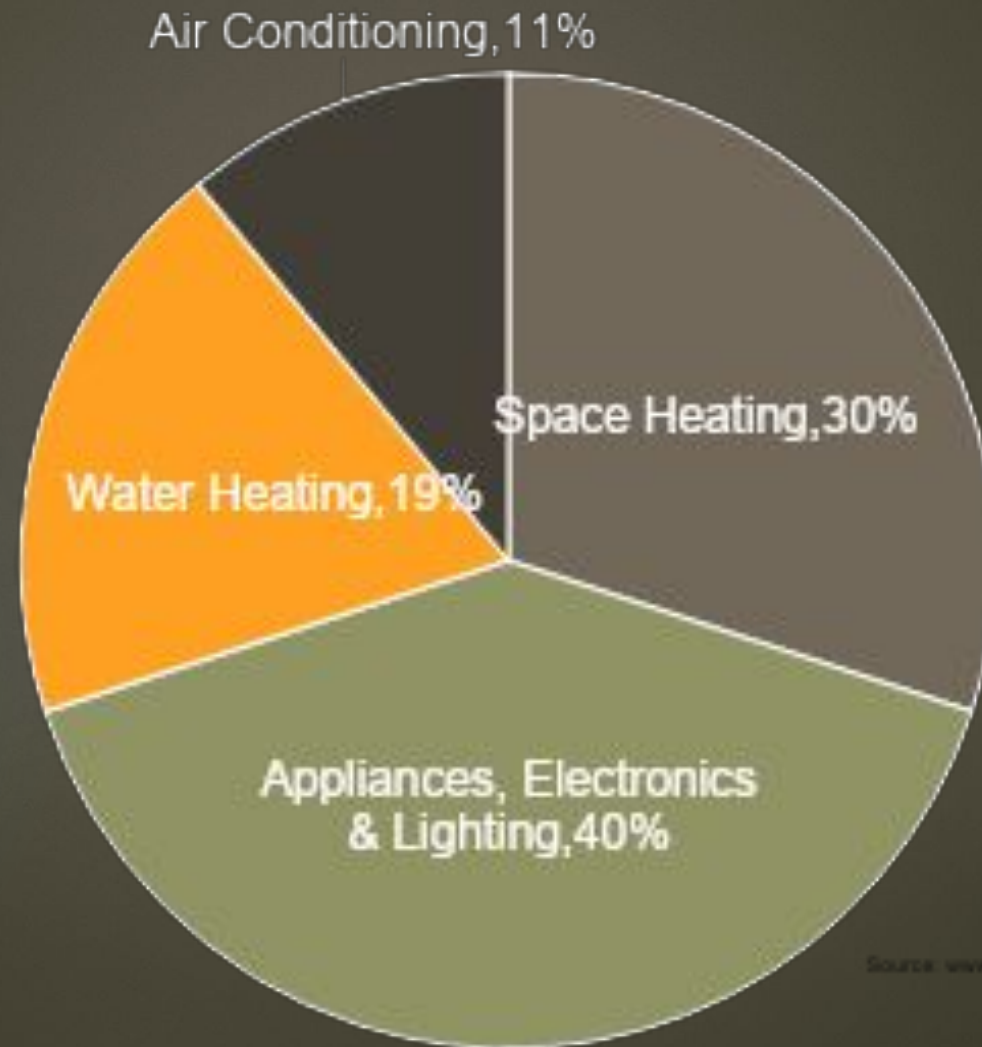


Areas of Focus

- ▶ FINANCIAL PROTECTION
- ▶ HEALTHCARE ACCESS
- ▶ UTILITY BILLS/ENERGY EQUITY
- ▶ CIVIL JUSTICE



How much energy do we use?



Source: www.eia.gov

Unplug electronics that aren't in use.

- ▶ The average home contains **40 idle products** constantly drawing power and together these devices may account for as much as **10%** of household energy use.



Use power strips.



- ▶ If you don't feel like unplugging six different electronic items every time you're not using your TV and computer, simply plug them all into a single surge protector and turn the device off.

Weatherize your windows.

- ▶ By applying plastic film to windows, you create a barrier keeping heat inside and cold air outside.
- ▶ You can buy these kits at the hardware store for \$1-\$3 per window.



PRO TIP: Tape bubble wrap to the window in between the window and the plastic barrier to keep more warm air inside your home.

Turn down the temperature on your water heater.



- ▶ Most water heaters are automatically set to 140 degrees F, which is hotter than you will likely ever need.
- ▶ Turn the temperature down 20 degrees (or more) and save your water heater some work and yourself 10% on heating costs.

PRO TIP: Invest in a water temperature gauge.

Insulate your pipes.

- ▶ Heat escapes when pipes are not insulated, making your hot water heater work harder.
- ▶ If you add simple foam insulation, you keep that heat from escaping, thereby saving you money.
- ▶ You can purchase inexpensive foam insulation at any hardware store.



Use energy-saving bulbs.

- ▶ An LED bulb lasts 2 to 4 times longer than a CFL, and 25 to 35 times longer than a standard incandescent bulb.



Always turn off the lights when you leave the room.



- ▶ Your lighting is responsible for about 15% of a home's electricity use. That means turning off the lights can definitely reduce your home's energy use--and your family's energy bill!

Insulate your switch-plate covers.



- ▶ Your sockets and light switches are essentially holes in the wall that allow air to flow through.
- ▶ You can prevent air from escaping through these openings by placing a thin foam insulator in between the cover and the socket opening.
- ▶ They are available at your local hardware store.

Seal off rooms that are not in use.

- ▶ Consider closing the door to rooms that you are not using.
- ▶ If there is no door, you can use sheet plastic or a blanket to close off the opening to the room.
- ▶ But be careful not to impede airflow within the home.



Make sure nothing is blocking the air ducts and heating vents.



PRO TIP: Un-screw vent caps and clean them out thoroughly, removing dust and dirt to help air flow easily.

- ▶ Do not put furniture in front of your air vents.
- ▶ Blocked air vents make it more difficult for your HVAC (heating, ventilation and cooling) system to maintain a comfortable temperature, which can lead to higher heating bills.

Use a door sweep in your door frame.



- ▶ A door sweep will prevent air from escaping beneath the door.
- ▶ You can also roll up a towel and place that in front of the door to prevent airflow.

Program your thermostat.

- ▶ Set your thermostat to 68 degrees in the winter and 78 in the summer.
- ▶ When you go to bed, you can lower it to 65 in the winter or raise to 80 in the summer.
- ▶ A few degrees can go a long way in reducing your bills!



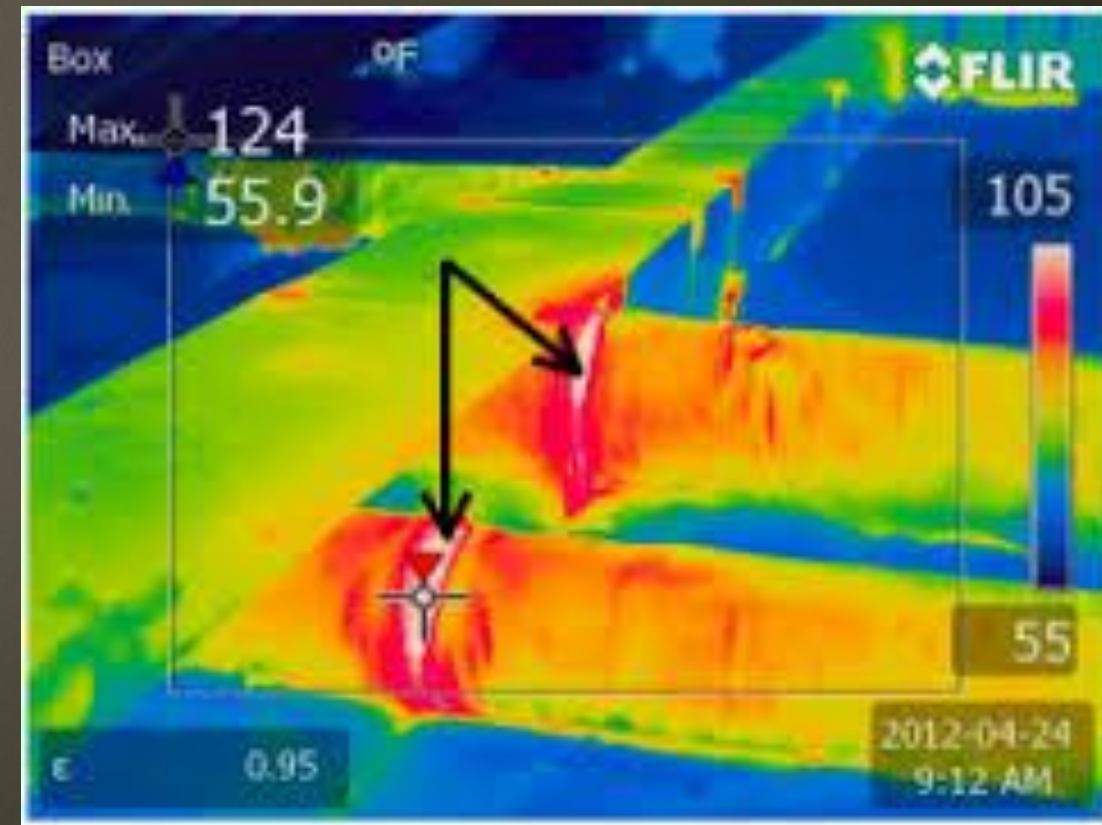
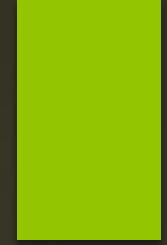
Plug up the cracks with caulk.



PRO TIP: Use caulk inside and out to make sure all cracks have been filled and no air can escape.

- ▶ Use caulk to plug-up cracks around door frames, windows, floors and the base boards.
- ▶ Make sure that no air is passing through; that escaped air can increase your heating and cooling bills.

Repair Leaky Ducts



Shop Around.

- ▶ When your contract is up, be sure to shop around. Don't just go with your current provider.
- ▶ Call **AllConnect** to see what deals are available to you:
1-866-684-7629
- ▶ **THEN**, call each provider directly and write down their best offers.
- ▶ Go with the best rate!



PRO TIP: Check out the Public Service Commission website to compare natural gas rates before signing up for a plan: www.psc.state.ga.us or call toll free at 1-800-282-5813

Know your billing and rate plan.

- ▶ Know which plans are going to be the most affordable for your home.
- ▶ Natural gas and electric providers have different types of plans:
 - ▶ **Standard Service Rate**
 - ▶ **Budget Billing Plan**
 - ▶ **FlatBill Rate**

Standard Service Rate

- Traditional service that has a monthly base charge and a rate that changes based on your monthly usage and the time of the year.
- ***Your bill may fluctuate depending upon your energy usage.***

Budget Billing Plan

- Averages out your monthly cost over a one-year period so that you pay nearly the same amount every month.
- ***You may pay more than your actual energy usage.***

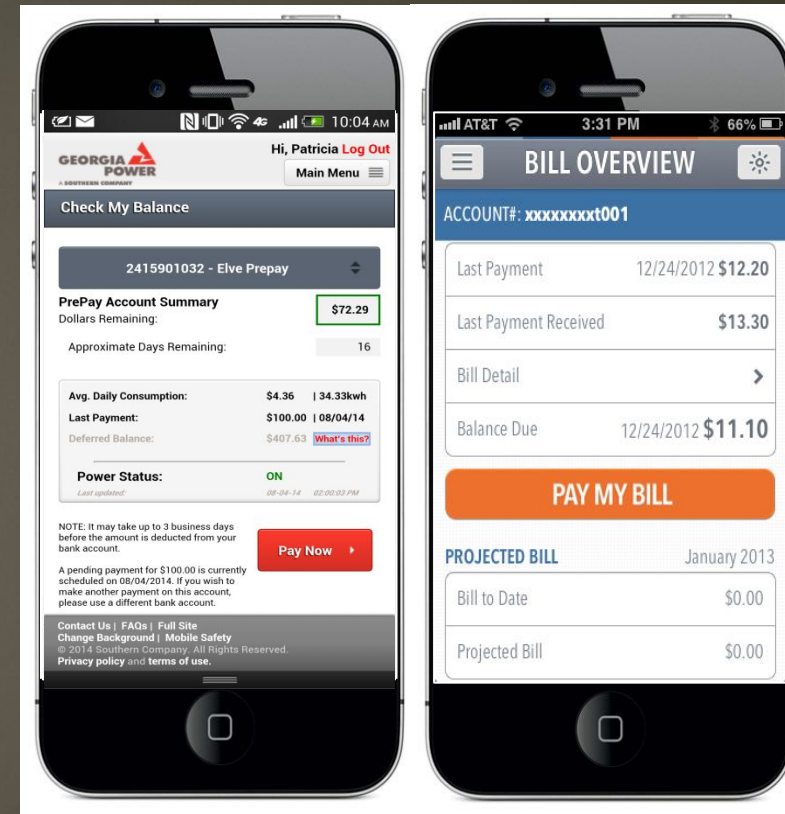
FlatBill Rate

- Based on a 12-month contracted rate, your bill is the same every month.
- ***You will usually pay more than your actual energy usage over the course of the year.***



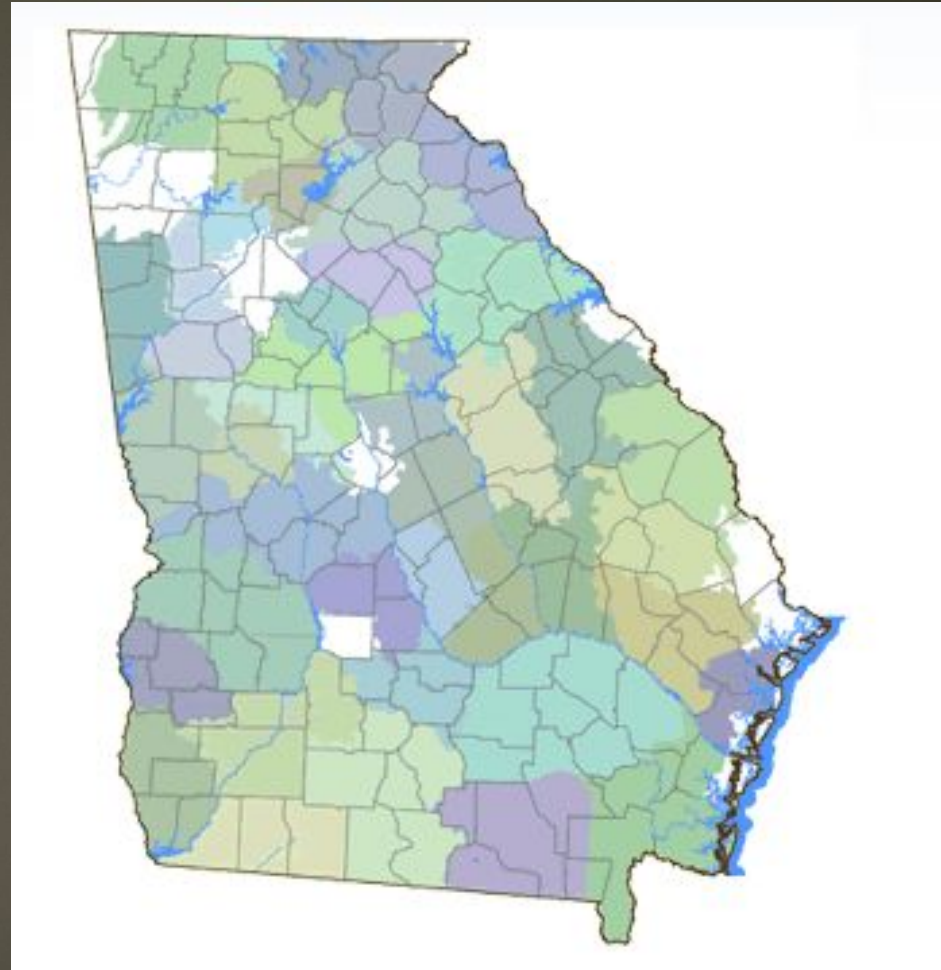
Pay As You Go (Georgia Power)

- ▶ If you are a Georgia Power customer, there is now a pay-as-you go program available.
 - ▶ No Deposit.
 - ▶ No Credit Checks.
 - ▶ No late fees.
 - ▶ No reconnection fees.
 - ▶ Typical 10% reduction in usage.
 - ▶ No monthly bill surprise.
 - ▶ Customers feel more “control” over their energy usage.



What is an EMC?

- ▶ Electric Membership Corporation
- ▶ 41 in Georgia
- ▶ Abides by certain rules:
 - ▶ Reinvest Profits Back Into Corporation
 - ▶ Accountability to Members (i.e. Customers)



PRO TIP: Read the bylaws or service rules for your EMC to see if your organization is acting in accordance with the rules to serve its members.

NEED FURTHER ASSISTANCE PAYING FOR UTILITY BILLS?

- ▶ Call United Way at 211 to see what financial assistance programs are available in your area.

For more consumer tips visit: www.georgiawatch.org



KNOW YOUR RIGHTS!

- ▶ Your power/gas cannot be cut off if:
 - ▶ You have a note from a doctor saying your health could be affected in a negative way by not having heat/cooling.
 - ▶ There is a weather advisory for excessively hot weather.
 - ▶ There is a weather advisory for temperatures below 32 degrees (F).

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DO YOU QUALIFY FOR A DISCOUNT?

- ▶ Seniors who are **at least 65 years of age with a total household income of \$24,280 or less** are eligible for a discount of up to \$14.00 off the monthly ATLANTA GAS LIGHT COMPANY'S base charge.
- ▶ Georgia Power customers with a combined household income of 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines or less, may qualify for an Income-Qualified Discount of \$33.50 per month.
- ▶ Eligible Georgia Power customers must be one of the following:
 - ▶ Be at least 65 years of age and live in a household with a combined income that is less than or equal to 200% of the federal poverty level, adjusted for household size
 - ▶ Receive Social Security Disability Insurance
 - ▶ Receive Supplemental Security Income
 - ▶ Participate in the federal Housing Choice Voucher Program (HUD Section 8)

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SIGN UP FOR LIHEAP

- ▶ Georgia Energy Assistance Program
 - ▶ Past due utility bills?
 - ▶ Need help making payments?

- ▶ **INCOME CRITERIA**

Household Size	Household Income
1	\$33,039
2	\$43,205
3	\$53,371
4	\$63,536
5	\$73,701
6	\$83,868
7	\$85,774
8	\$87,680

Each additional person add \$1,222



LIHEAP CONTACTS

▶ **FULTON:**

▶ Agency: **FACAA**

▶ Phone: (404) 320-0166

▶ Agency: **Tallatoona Community Action Partnership**

▶ Phone: (678) 721-9391

▶ **FIND YOUR AGENCY:**

▶ Visit Georgia Community Action Association [here](#).



SIGN UP FOR WEATHERIZATION

- ▶ Own your own home?
- ▶ Are you experiencing extremely high utility bills?
- ▶ Need professional assistance weatherizing?
- ▶ If your income level qualifies you for LIHEAP, you may be eligible for a full weatherization program for your home.

ASK YOUR LOCAL WEATHERIZATION AGENCY OR UTILITY FOR MORE DETAILS



YOUR WEATHERIZATION AGENCY

- ▶ **Tallatoona Community Action Partnership**
 - ▶ Phone: 678-721-9391
 - ▶ Areas Served: Fulton, Cobb, Bartow, Floyd, Gordon, Haralson, Polk, Paulding
- ▶ **Hope Works**
 - ▶ Phone: 404-872-0167
 - ▶ Areas Served: all income-qualified Georgia Power customers over 60
- ▶ **Find Your Weatherization Agency**
 - ▶ Visit Georgia Environmental Finance Authority [here](#).

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Energy Assistance for Savings & Efficiency (EASE) Georgia Power

- ▶ If you are a Georgia Power customer living in single or multi-family housing, you may be able to receive energy efficiency improvements for your home to reduce your or your tenants' power bill. Improvements include:
 - ▶ Smart thermostat
 - ▶ Attic insulation
 - ▶ Duct sealing
 - ▶ Air sealing
 - ▶ Efficiency lighting
 - ▶ Pipe wrap insulation
 - ▶ And more...
- ▶ **To apply:**
 - ▶ Online at www.georgiapower.com
 - ▶ Contact your community action agency



QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

► **Call Georgia Watch toll-free at:**

1-(866) 33-WATCH or 1-(866) 339-2824

Visit us online at www.georgiawatch.org to see our resources and/or **share your energy story!**

