

SAVING MONEY ON YOUR UTILITY BILLS

GEORGIA WATCH – FALL 2017

www.georgiawatch.org



Who is Georgia Watch?

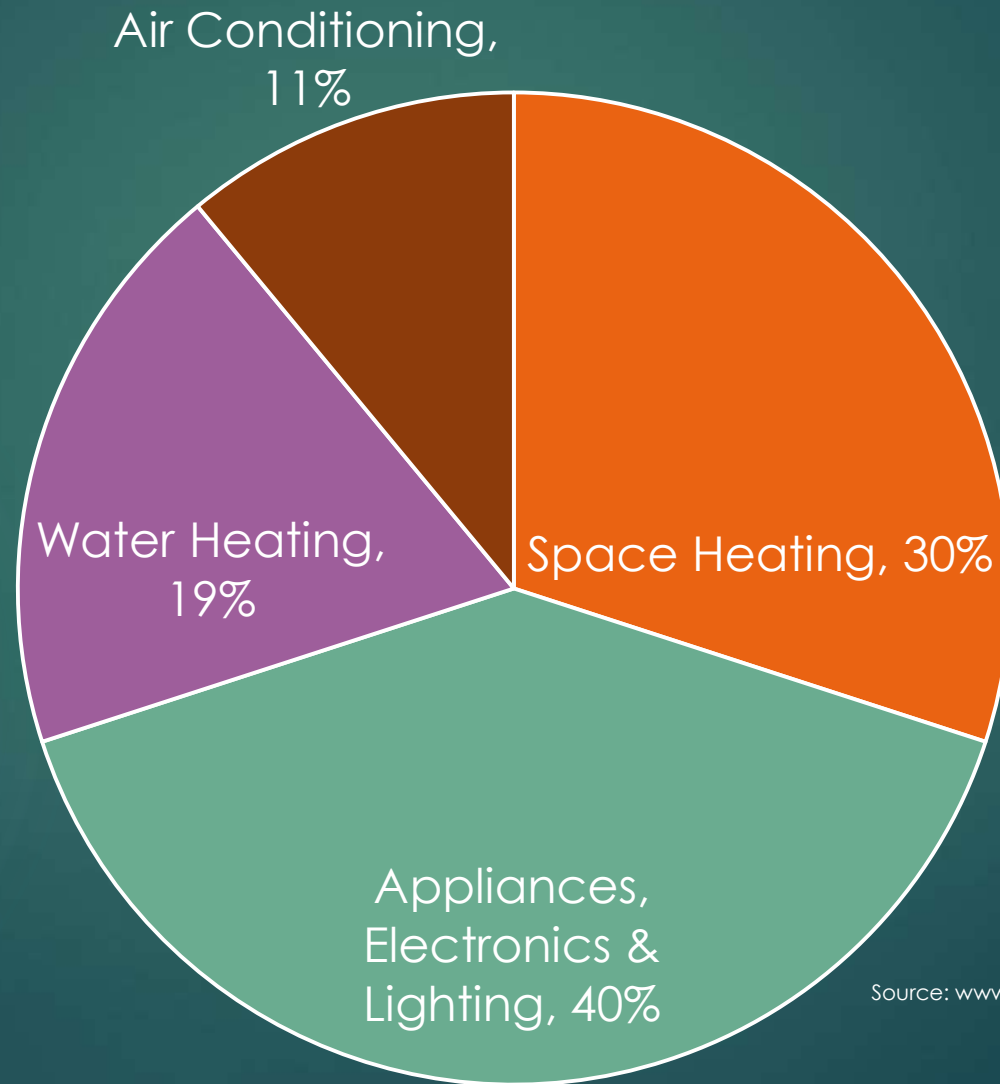
- ▶ Work diligently to make Georgia a model for consumer protection.
- ▶ Empower consumers through outreach and education.
- ▶ Serve as a trusted resource for elected officials, the public, and the media.
- ▶ Keep a watchful eye on legislation that affects consumers.
- ▶ Offer a toll-free Consumer Hotline: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

- ▶ Close the door or seal off 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.



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!



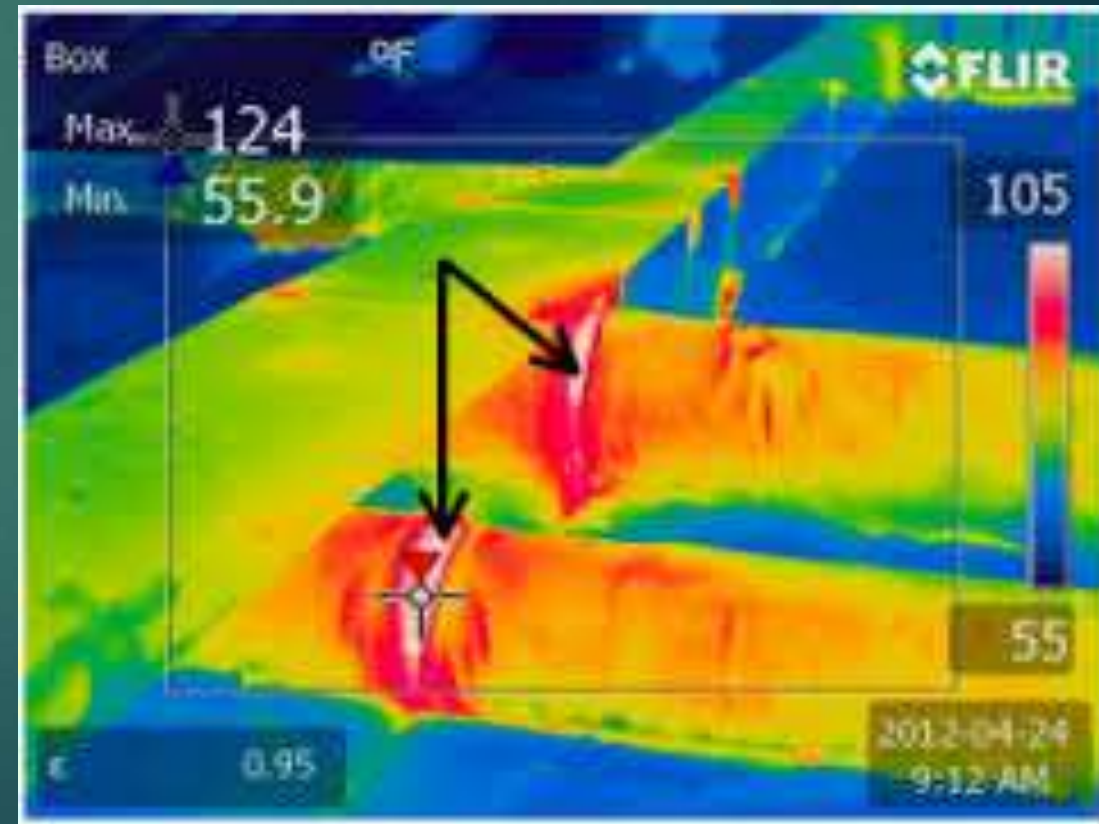
Plug up the cracks with caulk.



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.

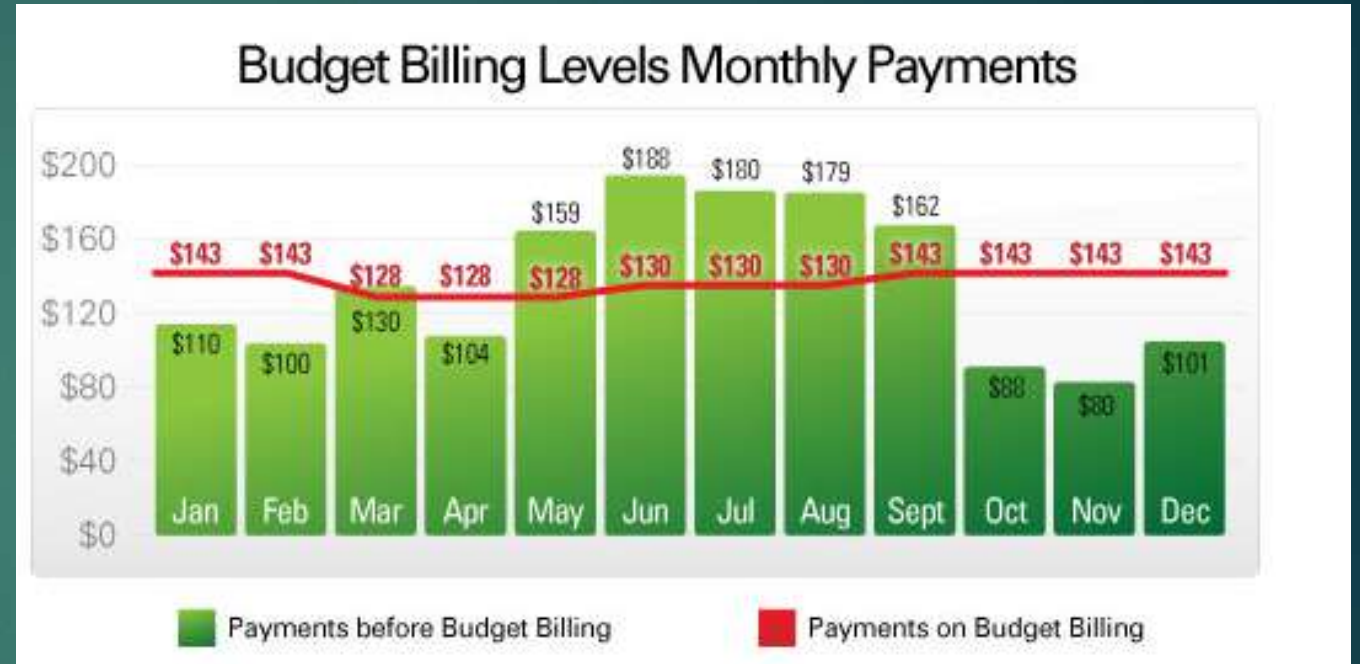
- ▶ When your contract is up, be sure to shop around. Don't just go with your current provider.
- ▶ Call **AllConnect** to see what deals are available to you:
1-866-684-7629
- ▶ **THEN**, call each provider directly and write down their best offers.
- ▶ Go with the best rate!



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 plan.

- ▶ Know which plans are going to be the most affordable for your home.
- ▶ Natural gas and electric providers have different types of plans:
 - ▶ Balanced Billing
 - ▶ Variable Rate
 - ▶ Fixed-rate
 - ▶ 'Budget' Billing
 - ▶ FlatBill



Source: Georgia Power

BUDGET BILLING: \$1,632

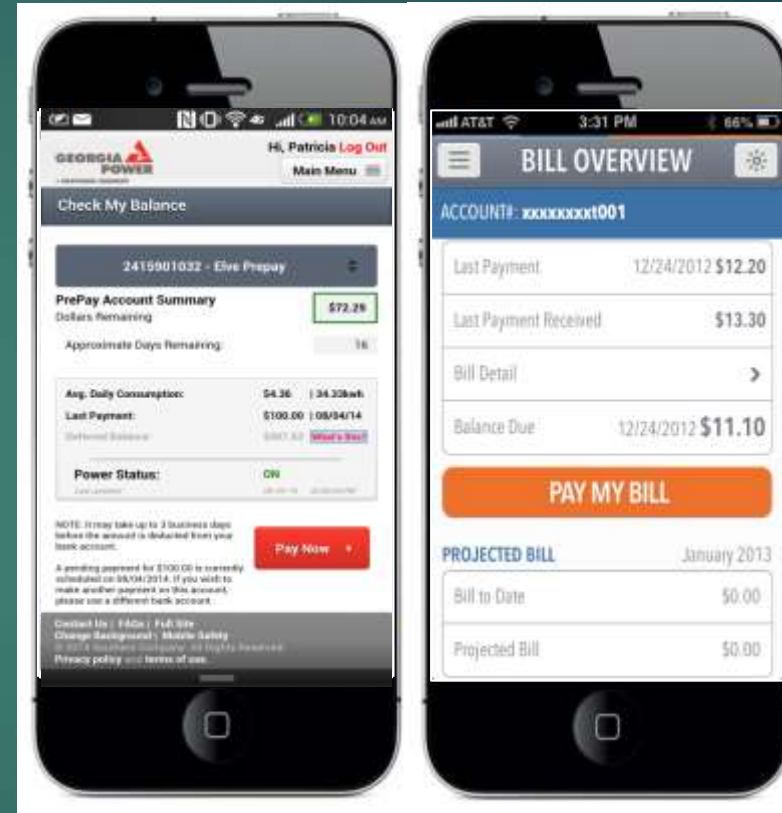
STANDARD: \$1,581

DIFFERENCE OF: \$51



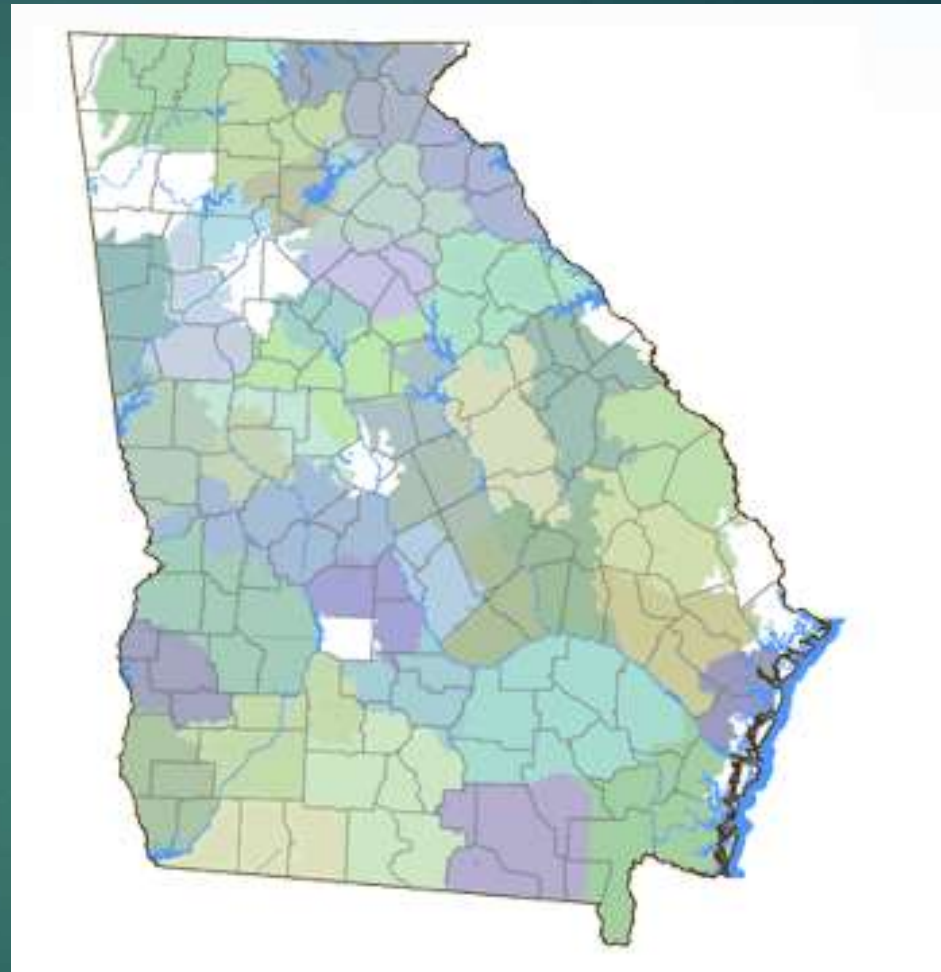
Pay As You Go (Georgia Power)

- ▶ 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).



ARE YOU 65 OR OLDER?

- ▶ Seniors who are at least 65 years of age with a total household income of \$14,355 or less are eligible for a discount of up to \$14.00 off the monthly ATLANTA GAS LIGHT COMPANY'S base charge.
- ▶ Seniors who are **at least 65 years of age** with a total **household income of no more than \$23,540** also get a \$6.00 fuel credit and a discount of up to \$18.00 off their bill for metered service per month from GEORGIA POWER.



SIGN UP FOR LIHEAP

- ▶ Low-Income Heating Assistance Program
 - ▶ Past due utility bills?
 - ▶ Need help making payments?

▶ INCOME CRITERIA

Household Size	Household Income
1	\$21,180
2	\$27,697
3	\$34,214
4	\$40,731
5	\$47,248
6	\$53,765
7	\$54,987
8	\$58,209

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 ORGANIZATION FOR MORE DETAILS



YOUR WEATHERIZATION AGENCY

▶ Tallatoona Community Action Partnership

- ▶ Phone: 678-721-9391
- ▶ Areas Served: Fulton, Cobb, Bartow, Floyd, Gordon, Haralson, Polk, Paulding

▶ Resource Service Ministries, Hope Works

- ▶ Phone: 404-872-0167
- ▶ Areas Served: all income-qualified Georgia Power customers

▶ Find Your Weatherization Agency

- ▶ Visit Georgia Environmental Finance Authority [here](#).

For more consumer tips visit: www.georgiawatch.org



Energy Assessment & Solutions Program (Georgia Power)

- ▶ If you are a low-income 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:**

- ▶ Call SEEL call-center at 833-347-5433
- ▶ Online at www.georgiapower.com/EASP.
- ▶ 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

