



# CONNECTIONS

News and Information from OUC—The *Reliable One* | DECEMBER 2024

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## ENERGY EFFICIENCY: *What It Is and Why It Matters*



Energy Efficiency means getting the most from the energy you use, whether cooling your home, powering appliances or charging an electric vehicle. Even small changes can save energy and reduce costs.

Similarly, home appliances like HVAC systems and water heaters have become more energy-efficient, saving you money on your utility bill while contributing to lower carbon emissions and reduced strain on the electric grid. When appliance shopping, look for the Energy Star label to ensure efficiency.

Even without upgrading appliances, you can save energy by improving insulation or using smart technology to monitor and automate your energy usage. Timed power strips and smart systems help reduce wasted energy from idle devices.

At OUC, we offer free home energy audits to help you find ways to save. Our specialists assess your energy use and suggest efficiency upgrades, supported by rebates and payment plans. Efficiency benefits everyone by lowering costs, reducing grid strain and promoting sustainability in Central Florida.



LED BULBS  
USE  
**75%**  
LESS  
ENERGY

Annual Watts  
consumption comparison

LED  
**16,425**

Incandescent  
**65,700**

Discover more ways to save at  
[OUCblog.com/energyefficiency](https://www.oucblog.com/energyefficiency).



## HOLI-DOs & HOLI-DON'Ts



*As you celebrate with family and friends during this festive holiday season, keep your home and loved ones safe by following these electrical safety tips:*

- **Holi-Do:** Use energy-efficient LED lights.
- **Holi-Do:** Properly secure inflatable lawn ornaments.
- **Holi-Do:** Replace frayed light strands.
- **Holi-Do:** Use indoor lights inside.
- **Holi-Do:** Keep space heaters at least 3 feet from bedding, clothing, draperies, furniture and rugs.
- **Holi-Do:** Keep candles on solid surfaces and away from flammable items.
- **Holi-Don't:** Overload power strips.
- **Holi-Don't:** Leave decorations on all night.
- **Holi-Don't:** Allow fingers or paws near electrical decorations.
- **Holi-Don't:** Use tinsel – it's not environmentally friendly and can't be recycled.
- **Holi-Don't:** Use space heaters near water or flammable liquids.
- **Holi-Don't:** Fall asleep with an electrical blanket left on.

Find more safety tips at [OUCBlog.com/holidaysafety](https://www.oucblog.com/holidaysafety)

## Payment Changes



**Starting January 1, 2025**, cash and drop box payments will no longer be accepted at St. Cloud City Hall. Customers may make a utility payment with a credit/debit card in the walk-in center.

As of October 1, 2024, a \$1.30 convenience fee has been waived for payments made via cash, money order, check or debit card, at all participating MoneyGram, Fidelity Express and Western Union locations. For a full list of payment locations, visit [OUC.com/paymentlocations](https://www.oc.gov/ouc.com/paymentlocations).

## Upgrade Insulation and Receive a Rebate

Adding attic insulation is one of the most effective and least expensive ways to increase your home's energy efficiency. OUC offers residential customers a rebate of 10¢ per square foot on upgraded attic insulation with an R-30 value or higher.

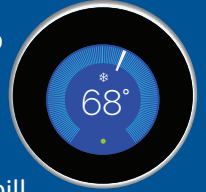
Learn more at [OUCBlog.com/rebates](https://www.oc.gov/oucblog.com/rebates).



## Florida Cold Weather Energy Efficiency Tips



Check out these tips to warm up to savings during sweater weather:



- If you keep your thermostat at 68 degrees, you can save 4-6% on the heating portion of your bill for each degree you lower it below 68.
- Set the A/C fan to 'auto.'
- Replace or clean dirty A/C filters monthly.
- Install a programmable thermostat to adjust the temperature automatically.
- Keep drapes and blinds open during the day to let in the sun's heat.
- Set your ceiling fan to run clockwise to force warmer air toward the floor.
- Monitor electric and water consumption hourly with OUC's Usage Dashboard.
- Set alert notifications when a specified consumption threshold is met to help control energy costs.

To see your Usage Dashboard, log in to [MyOUC.com](https://www.oc.gov/myouc.com). Find more winter safety and efficiency tips at [OUCBlog.com/coldweather](https://www.oc.gov/oucblog.com/coldweather).

## Stay Informed: OUC's Daily Updates and Efforts During Hurricane Milton

During Hurricane Milton, OUC provided daily email updates on power restoration efforts. Sign up to receive digital communications and stay informed by logging into [My.OUC.com](https://www.oc.gov/myouc.com). To read more about OUC's restoration efforts during Hurricane Milton, visit [OUCBlog.com/hurricanemilton](https://www.oc.gov/oucblog.com/hurricanemilton).



## COMMUNITY CORNER



### OUC Employees Make Safety First and Install Fire Alarms

OUC employees and their families partnered with the American Red Cross of Central Florida and Orange County Fire Rescue Department for the "Sound The Alarm" initiative, promoting fire safety and reinforcing the commitment to making safety a community priority.

Volunteers installed 132 fire alarms in the Starlight Ranch Community, near OUC's Pershing Operations &

Maintenance Center, as part of the 2025 OUCares campaign, "Safety Is No Accident."

The event had a significant impact, as participants installed life-saving equipment to help prevent house fires, making a lasting difference in the safety and well-being of local residents.

Read more at [OUCBlog.com/firealarms](https://www.oc.gov/oucblog.com/firealarms).



Para ver toda nuestra información en español, por favor visite [espanol.ouc.com](https://www.oc.gov/espanol.ouc.com).



ORLANDO UTILITIES COMMISSION

RELIABLE PLAZA • 100 W. Anderson Street • Orlando, FL 32801  
Tel: 407-423-9018 • [ouc.com](https://www.oc.gov)

