



How Much Do Holiday Light Decorations Really Cost You?

In a notable scene in *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation*, Chevy Chase's Clark Griswold causes an electrical brownout across Chicago after draping his house in an overly-festive avalanche of holiday lights and decorations. Although such an event would be extremely unlikely to occur in reality, increased electricity usage from holiday lights can place an additional strain on consumers wallets during a time of year when the financial resources of many are already pushed to the limit. In fact, American usage of holiday lights is so pervasive that that they are directly observable [from space](#), contributing to 20% to 50% increases in nighttime brightness in the weeks leading up to Christmas. But how much exactly does it cost to keep your home looking merry and bright for the holidays?

Based on national averages of the price of electricity per kilowatt hour, a regular string of 100 incandescent holiday lights would cost about \$3.50 to run for about 12 hours a day for 45 days.¹ Accordingly, a Christmas tree with three strings of 100 bulb lights on it would cost about \$10.50 to run for the season. A house with 10 strings of similar lights strung up outside would cost about \$35 as would two light-up reindeer in the yard consisting of 500 bulbs each. Thus, the total average cost for a decorating scheme as described above would cost about \$80.50 to run over the course of the season.

One of the simplest ways for consumers to save money on holiday electricity usage is to swap out older, incandescent holiday lights for new, LED lights. Mirroring the example above, a string of 100 LED lights would only cost about 0.41 cents to run, compared to \$3.50 for incandescent over the same time period. As such, the holiday decorations described above would only cost about \$9.43 with LED lights, compared to \$80.50 with incandescent.

¹ Initial calculation based on figures reported by *The Washington Post*, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2017/11/24/what-your-christmas-lights-will-do-to-your-electricity-bill/?utm_term=.7b65cec53dd9.

Accordingly, LED holiday lights are truly an investment that would quickly pay for themselves over subsequent holiday seasons.

There are many other strategies that consumers can adopt in order to cut back on the costs of running their holiday lights. The use of a light timer can control exactly how long lights remain on or off with the added convenience of not having to worry about forgetting to turn lights on or off. Likewise, consumers can choose to only turn on their holiday lights while they are actually home or hosting holiday gatherings. Similarly, those consumers concerned with cost can choose to put up and run their holiday lights later in the season and closer to the actual holiday being celebrated. Of course, consumers can always put up fewer lighted decorations and supplement their display with other decorations such as garlands, wreaths, and pine boughs. With a few sensible decisions regarding holiday decorations, consumers can easily save extra money with which to make merry during the holiday season.



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