

WATT'S UP?



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Make it a green holiday with our energy-saving gift ideas

This year have yourself a low carbon, eco-friendly holiday season by selecting sustainable solar-powered, recycled and eco-friendly decorations, cards, and gifts. The good news is that you don't have to be a Grinch to go green. Also, electronic companies continue to design products that use less energy, contain fewer toxic ingredients and less wasteful packing, and recycled or easily recyclable materials.

Solar Powered Holiday Lights

No one wants to give up beautiful lighting at parties or during the holidays, but everyone wants to cut down on electricity use.

These solar powered string lights are the perfect green solution: Using eco-friendly LED lights, they charge during daylight hours and automatically turn on at night. Each 37-foot string holds 60 LED bulbs, a solar panel with pre-installed rechargeable Ni-MH batteries, and a ground stake. They use much less electricity and last longer than conventional ones ([Solar Christmas/Party String Lights](#), \$39.97).

Think about your gift packaging

One creative idea may be to use old newspapers, which you can decorate with drawings, stamps, and other crafty designs. It'll not only save you cash, but also show your loved ones how much care you put into presenting their gifts.

Share a piece of yourself

Avoid material consumption altogether. Instead, offer your services to baby-sit while your friends enjoy a date, give a gift certificate for a massage or a winter's worth of driveway shoveling (in which case you just save that massage for yourself).

Skip the paper holiday cards, give a membership or donate to a cause

Rather than sending holiday cards to friends and family, consider making donations to favorite charity organizations. Or consider a [Zipcar](#) or [I-GO Car Sharing](#) membership for a friend or family member who more frequently must turn to taxis to supplement their public transport lifestyle. These memberships are great ways to help lower family transportation costs, reduce urban congestion, and improve air quality. Not sure which one is the best fit? Consider [charity gift certificates](#). If you do choose to send holiday cards, try to find ones made out of recycled paper. Or, even better, send e-cards. [Hallmark](#) and [Blue Mountain](#) both have good selections.

Consider giving gifts made from renewable resources

Don't overfeed your family and friends this holiday season. I recently read that households dump \$43 billion worth of food a year, or about fourteen percent of what we buy. That doesn't include plate scrapings. Fifteen percent of that waste includes products still within their expiration date but never opened. Five percent of American's leftovers could feed 4 million people for one day and disposing of food waste costs the United States \$1 billion a year. So save money by cutting back on the amount of dishes that you serve and use recipes that don't include a laundry list of ingredients.

We hope these holiday tips are helpful. And we thank you for your continuing participation in the ComEd Residential Real-Time Pricing Program.

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