

## Now's the Time to Twist & Save with Energy-Saving Light Bulbs

Whether you or your tenants are paying the electric bill, it's now more cost effective than ever to switch to ENERGY STAR® compact fluorescent light bulbs. In addition to being smaller and brighter, many are now (finally!) under a buck. (Look for the "Twist & Save" displays at Bartell Drug, Home Depot, Costco, Lowe's, Fred Meyer, McLendon's and Maple Leaf Ace Hardware.) Good news for tenants who could not stomach paying \$5-\$10 for a light bulb they may or may not remember to take with them when they move!

But at a dollar a pop, it's now a no-brainer. For tenants with non-electric space and water heat, the switch to Energy Star bulbs should make a noticeable, if slight, difference in their electric bills. And if they have electric space and water heat, changing to Energy Star light bulbs may not make much of a dent in the bills during the winter months, but over the course of a year, the savings for switching out 5 bulbs would be about \$18. Not bad for a \$5 investment.

As for being smaller, many brands of the 13-watt mini twister are now a tad shorter than a regular bulb. It's true clip-on lamp shades will not clip onto a twister, but you can now find Energy Star bulbs with a variety of plastic covers to look like a regular bulb, a vanity globe or a reflector. With just these 3 options, I was able to change out every single bulb in my home that was not on a dimmer. Speaking of dimmers, if you put Energy Star bulbs in fixtures controlled by dimmers, they're likely to fail within days or weeks. Ballasts need a precise current and most dimmers, even if turned all the way up, do not provide this. You can find Energy Star bulbs specially designed to work with dimmers, but I have yet to find one that doesn't hum, flicker or change color as they dim.

And yes, Energy Star bulbs are brighter. With the improvement of the Energy Star specification, manufacturers must now meet stricter minimum lumen-per-watt output totals. Plus, the Department of Energy randomly tests products on the shelves to see if they meet the standard. If a bulb fails, it's taken off the list (see it here at [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)).

So, now's the best time to "Twist & Save"! For the most current list of retailers offering these new low prices on Energy Star bulbs, visit [www.seattle.gov/twistandsave](http://www.seattle.gov/twistandsave) discounts sponsored by Seattle City Light.

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## LEGAL QUESTION

### Problem Neighbors—What Are My Rights

**Q:** I manage a triplex adjacent to a larger building. The property next door is a rental and the police recently made a sizeable drug seizure and arrested the tenants. However, rather than solving the problem, things have gotten worse. The tenants got out on bail and they are now "partying hard." The property manager next door has taken no steps to deal with the very serious public safety problem in their building. All my tenants have been in my building for years, but they are thinking of moving due to the noise, open drug use and vandalism that is taking place at our building, caused by the occupants next door. I've spoken to the manager of the property next door and he says they are taking steps to deal with their problem tenants. This has gone on for more than two months since the drug bust and nothing has changed. Could an eviction really be taking that long? The owner of the neighboring property is ignoring my calls for action and I want to know my rights.

**A:** After receiving your initial inquiry, I took the liberty of checking online and verified that no eviction is pending at the neighboring property. While evictions are often contested and the process can take a month or so, I am not aware of any valid reason why the county court records don't show a pending eviction. It appears that your neighbor is neglecting the situation.

You may wish to document all your various attempts to communicate with your neighbor in one final letter. That letter should also inquire where your neighbor is in the eviction process. This letter should be detailed and itemize the negative impacts of this property on your tenants and how you are at financial risk as a result. The letter should invite the neighbor to inform you of where they are in the process. You should also offer to help by testifying in court on your neighbor's behalf if necessary. You should obtain proof of delivery of the letter, either delivering it personally or via certified mail. Hopefully, this is a matter of mis-communication and your neighbor is a responsible rental property manager and that they are facing difficulties in enforcing their rights.

Should you learn that this landlord is ignoring its obligations to protect the community (and himself), you will want to consider whether to pursue legal action against your neighbor for nuisance. Two statutes provide a theory under which you can bring

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## PROPERTIES FOR SALES IN LAKE CHELAN

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## Ask the Energy Expert:

**Q:** What should I do to prepare my properties and my tenants for the possibility of a power outage?

**A:** Strong winds, ice, snow—even a car hitting a power pole—can knock out power. Although most power outages are relatively short, be prepared and encourage your tenants to be prepared, too. At Portland General Electric, we're ready for winter storm season, and we encourage property managers and tenants to plan ahead by following these recommendations.

Take steps to ensure tenant safety and minimize disruptions. Walk through an outage response plan with on-site managers and maintenance staff to make sure your property is ready in the event of an outage:

- Locate electrical supply panels and know how to shut off power.
- Identify equipment power switches.
- Install and maintain emergency lighting in common areas.
- Ensure electronic door locks can be bypassed manually.
- Make sure you and your staff have a plan for maintaining or protecting any critical equipment.
- Protect computers from power surges with good quality surge protectors. Prevent data loss with automatic backup programs and uninterruptible power supply devices.

Create and maintain outage kits. Prepare an outage kit for each of your properties. Ask tenants to create outage kits as well. Each kit should include:

- Flashlight(s)
- Battery-powered or wind-up radio
- Battery-powered clock
- Extra, fresh batteries for the above (even unused batteries lose power over time)
- Emergency phone numbers
- Old-fashioned "corded" phone (cordless phones require electricity)

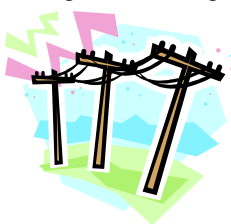
Consider backup power. Do any of your properties need a backup generator? Here's how to decide.

1. Identify critical functions and equipment.
2. Estimate the financial impact from loss of power to those functions.
3. Weigh this cost against the expense of purchasing and installing a backup power generator.

What to do if the power goes out?

- Check for blown fuses or tripped circuits. If these are okay, see if neighboring properties are without power.
- If an individual unit has lost power, check to see if an external breaker has been tripped.

- Call your electrical utility company immediately. You may be asked for information, or you may hear a message if the situation has already been reported.
- Check for downed utility lines near your property and keep people away.
- Turn off major electrical equipment to reduce the electrical load when power is restored.
- Listen to a battery-powered radio for updates on major outages.



- If your lights are very dim or bright once power is restored, turn off the power at the service panel and call your utility again.

Encourage tenants to play it safe. During a power outage, remind your tenants of the following safety precautions:

- Bundle up to keep warm and wear a hat.
- Don't use charcoal briquettes or portable generators indoors or in garages. These must be used outdoors in well-ventilated areas.
- Candles and fireplaces can be safety hazards if left unattended.

## Happy Valentine's Day!



## ORCA ♦ WISDOM ♦

### The Seven Deadly Sins

**Truth, if it becomes a weapon against persons.**

**Beauty, if it becomes vanity.**

**Love, if it becomes possessive.**

**Loyalty, if it becomes blind, careless trust.**

**Tolerance, if it becomes indifference.**

**Self-confidence, if it becomes arrogance.**

**Faith, if it becomes self-righteous.**

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legal action against the neighbor. Under RCW 7.48.210, any private person can bring legal action against another if the nuisance is "specially injurious to himself." This statute authorizes you to bring an action for recovery of damages. Such a case can be heard in small claims court (although you cannot receive an equitable remedy such as abatement of the nuisance in small claims court).

Another alternative is to seek relief under RCW 7.43. This statute governs actions for damages and for abatement of drug nuisances. Actions under this statute must be brought in superior court, and you will likely require the services of an attorney to assist you.

Both these statutes are complicated and you will need to read them carefully to determine if your circumstances warrant pursuing your claim in this manner. Before proceeding, you should also try and communicate your concerns to the local police department. They may already have commenced proceedings against tenant or property owners.

*\*Article written by Attorney Christopher Benis, 206-448-0402, of Harrison, Benis & Spence, LLP. This column does not constitute legal advice. Specific problems require specific solutions.*