

An average all-electric New Zealand home uses around 10,000 kilowatt hours of electricity per year. At 2008 prices this cost around \$2,000 in energy charges.

There is plenty of scope for saving on this cost – especially in the areas of space and water heating, which may account for 63% of the total bill.

We tend to think of our electricity as coming from an endless supply of renewable hydro energy, but space and water heating often occurs in the peak load times, when thermal power stations are being used to meet marginal power demand. And when your thousand-watt heater is powered by a thermal station it takes only an hour and a half to generate a kilo of carbon dioxide towards the greenhouse effect.

Electricity accounts for only about 70% of New Zealand residential energy consumption. Solid fuels (wood and coal) make up about 20% (mostly used for space heating) and gas about 10%.

The way we heat and ventilate our homes also has a significant effect on our comfort and health. Water vapour and moisture levels, for instance, are a prime factor in Auckland's very high incidence of asthma.

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