

You wouldn't leave home with every light in your house burning. But running your swimming pool's pump harder than it needs to run is a lot like leaving all the lights on. It burns extra energy and costs you money. A typical pool pump can consume the same amount of energy as 25 60-watt light bulbs.

It's important, then, to make sure your pool pump is operating as efficiently as possible. The U. S. Department of Energy cites a study which found that making just two adjustments—reducing the amount of time pumps run and installing smaller-sized pumps—saved Florida homeowners up to 75 percent of their original pumping bills.

Here are some suggestions for decreasing your energy costs:

Cut the pump's operating time.

If the water is circulating as the pool's chemicals are added, they should remain mixed, and most debris can be removed with a skimmer or a vacuum. So reduce your pump's running time to 3 to 6 hours a day, and don't use those hours all at once. Instead, install a timer that will automatically divide those hours into shorter cycles.

Install a high-efficiency motor.

Modern high-efficiency motors consume 20 percent less electricity than standard motors.

Buy a smaller pump.

The larger the pump, the greater the electrical and maintenance costs. Buy the smallest size pump appropriate. The Florida study showed that a .75 horsepower or smaller pump usually is sufficient for residential pools. Consult a pool supplier's design chart to find the smallest pump that will suffice.

If you prefer a large pump to improve vacuum capability, choose a two-speed pump. Most two-speed pumps use 75 watts on low and 1,500 watts on high.

Decrease the water circulation system's hydraulic resistance.

Use wider pipes or decrease the length of pipes, and replace 90-degree elbow pipes with 45-degree ones or flexible pipes. Also consider installing a larger filter.

Clean drains and filters regularly.

Keep drains clear of debris. Clogs make the pump work harder, which wastes energy. Backwash the filter appropriately. Too much backwashing wastes water, but not backwashing enough requires more effort from the pump.