

Energy Conservation: What Can One Person Do?

“One person can make a difference and everyone should try,” (quote from John F. Kennedy). But what can one person do to conserve energy? With the recent winter storm in February that Texas experienced with the “rolling blackouts,” this is a perfect opportunity to see what a difference one person can make. During the winter storm, a high of four million power outages were reported. According to the U.S. Census, there are 11.2 million housing units in Texas as of 2019. That’s around 36% of Texas without power at the storm’s peak of destruction.

What could people have done differently to conserve as much electricity as possible to avoid these rolling blackouts? First of all, during the time of the winter storm, mid-February, the sun rose around 7:00 am and set around 6:15 pm. During this time of day, there really is minimal need for electrical lights in the household. Turn them all off and utilize the windows for some natural light. According to studies, lighting can take up 20% of an electricity bill, so minimizing the use of electrical lights will reduce energy consumption in addition to saving money.

Since it was uncharacteristically cold during the February winter storm, people were using their heaters continuously. However, there are alternatives to turning up heaters and draining electricity. For example, put on extra clothing, wrap up in a blanket, and make a fire in the fireplace for some natural heat. During this storm at my own house, my parents had the fire burning in the fireplace nonstop. They even slept by the fireplace during the night to ensure that it never went out. When the sun was shining, my parents opened the blinds to allow the light and heat in from the sun. We

conserved energy by turning the thermostat down and wearing extra clothes. Our house never got below sixty-two degrees even though we were without power for more than eight hours during the rolling blackouts. If more Texas residents would have reduced the use of artificial heat and light during the February winter storm, we could have significantly reduced the amount of people being affected by the rolling blackouts.

People should conserve energy every day, not just during a winter storm. Turn off the television when it's not being watched, switch off lights and lamps, unplug chargers that are not charging anything, and shut down computers instead of letting them "sleep" while not in use. In general, pull plugs on things that are not currently in use like chargers, lamps, toasters, etc. Also, set the thermostat a few degrees higher in the summer and a few degrees lower in the winter. Although these few conservation tips may not seem like a lot, if many people follow these guidelines, a big difference will be noticed in the amount of electrical energy used. One person can make a difference by educating others on the importance of energy conservation and encouraging them to follow simple, inexpensive energy conservation tips.