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Brighnten the Season with

HOLIDAY LIGHTS

Courtesy of Metro Editorial for the Bulletin Special Projects

The holiday season invites people to transform their homes into wonderlands of lights, garlands and poinsettias. Each family has their own holiday traditions, and for most, decorating with hundreds of twinkling lights offers a festive and joyful start to the season.

Decorations might be awe-inspiring, but it's easy to forget just how much energy and resources endless strings of lights consume and how they often lead to substantially higher energy bills. Fortunately, there are ways for homeowners, whether they prefer subtle displays or more over-the-top arrangements, to save money and still celebrate the holiday season in style.

- Switch to more efficient lights. A great way to ensure holiday displays consume less energy is to change the bulbs being strung. Incandescent lights can use 80 to 90 percent more energy than LED lights. Gradually replace older light strands with newer, energy-efficient LEDs. Not only do LEDs require less energy, but they also can last longer than incandescent bulbs, meaning you won't have to replace them as frequently as more traditional bulbs. Furthermore, lower wattage usage means you can attach more strands of lights together safely. Also consider purchasing fiber-optic decorations. Fiber optic items are lit by one light, and the illumination carries through the fiber optic cables to the entire decoration.

- Use timers. Timers can be set to turn lights on and off at specific times, ensuring lights aren't turning on during the daytime or being left on late into the night by forgetful homeowners.

- Check light strands. Always inspect lights for frayed wires and any damage. Frayed lights are less efficient and pose a considerable safety risk.

- Make the most of the decorations by using mirrors and reflective ornaments to give the appearance that there are more lights without actually having to add more.

- Turn off ambient lighting outdoors so the decorative lights stand out more. If a Christmas tree is illuminating a front window, turn off the lights inside your home, as the tree and lights strung around large picture windows will provide enough light to make a living room bright, festive and cozy.

- Always select lights that have been certified for outdoor use to decorate your home's exterior, and never use outdoor lights inside.

Celebrating the season with bright and colorful lights is a timeless tradition, but it doesn't have to be a tradition that consumes copious amounts of energy. Take a moment to think about energy-efficient options when you start decking the halls for Christmas.

REALTORS® Hold Second Annual Holiday Lights Contest

After a very successful first year, the Central Oregon Association of REALTORS® (COAR) is now accepting applications for the Second Annual Holiday Lights Contest in Bend. Last year more than 20 homes and streets participated in the contest. "As REALTORS® our members value the pride that comes with being a part of a community, and holiday lights are a wonderful opportunity for family and friends to explore Bend," said Kim Gammond, Communications Director at COAR.

Residents in Bend can submit nominations for both homes and streets. Streets must have at least four homes participating to be judged. To nominate a home or street, please visit www.coar.com or email info@coar.com for a nomination form.

Voting for the winners will be done by the public via text messaging and online December 13-21, 2015.

"We are excited to involve the public in the voting process this year," said Gammond. "People can use our holiday lights tour map and vote for their favorites."

A \$400 prize will be presented to the winner of the home category, and \$500 to the winners in the street category. The winners will have the option of donating the winnings to a local nonprofit or retaining the winnings.

This event is sponsored by The Central Oregon Association of REALTORS® and Northwestern Home Loans with support from Shelley Textley Central Oregon Dream Team at HomeSmart Central Realty.

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