

# Why Adjust My Water Heater Temperature?

- Often water heater temperatures are set higher than necessary causing energy waste and increased risk of injury.
- Temperatures at 140°F can cause serious burns in less than five seconds. Water at 120°F requires nearly five minutes to cause similar injuries. This is especially important in homes with small children or those who could be at risk for unintentional exposure to hot water.
- Reducing water heater temperatures to 120°F, on average, saves a Salem Electric member approximately \$40 annually.
- **Don't adjust your water heater temperature if you run out of hot water frequently or if your dishwasher isn't equipped with a water temperature booster.**

## Did you Know?

**Third degree burns can occur in:**

**About one second at 155°F  
Less than five seconds at 140°F  
More than five minutes at 120°F**

## Caution

**Before making any adjustments, TURN OFF the power to your water heater at the electric service panel.**

**Please note, this information applies to *electric water heaters only*. If your water heater is fueled by natural gas or another fuel source, adjustments are made differently.**

## Step 1: Determine Current Temperature

- Wait two hours after your most recent household hot water use before measuring the water temperature.
- Use an accurate thermometer that reads temperatures in the 100°F to 160°F range (candy thermometers work well).
- Run hot water from the faucet nearest the water heater into a container holding the thermometer. Continue running the water until the thermometer reading stops rising and read the resulting temperature.

## Step 2: Make The Adjustment

- Typically, full-sized electric water heaters have two thermostats - each with their own access panel.
- Remove the access panels. Locate the thermostat to determine what temperature your water heater is set at. (Some heaters have a protective plastic covering, as long as it doesn't prevent access to the adjustment screw, just leave it in place).
- Water heater thermostats can be inaccurate. Before adjusting, use the formula below to determine the correct adjustment needed.

## Formula

Subtract 120°F from your faucet water temperature test result. Reduce the setting by the number of degrees indicated to result in a 120°F water temperature.

### Example:

Water Temperature = 135°F  
135°F - 120°F = 15°F Reduction

- Once you've determined the setting reduction needed, use a screwdriver to turn the thermostat adjustment screw until the pointer is on the desired temperature. Replace the access panels and restore power at the electrical panel.

## Step 3: After the Adjustment



- A few days after resetting the temperature you may want to re-measure the water temperature at the faucet to see that the desired temperature has been achieved.
- After lowering the temperature, if you begin to run out of hot water, repeat the process (be sure to turn the power OFF at the electric panel before any further adjustments), and slightly raise the temperature until you reach the desired setting.

**If you need to replace your electric water heater, SE pays a rebate for the purchase of qualifying models. Heat pump water heaters are an efficient option for many applications.**

**Contact us before making your purchase.**

## Questions?

If you have other questions about water heaters or other ways to save energy, visit:

[salemelectric.com](http://salemelectric.com)

Or call our Member Services Department at:

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## Save Energy and Money in Easy Steps

