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Tankless water heaters save money

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By [Christina McNamara](#) | [Comments\(0\)](#)

As energy costs continue to chip away at paychecks, many homeowners audit their homes for inefficient appliances and drafty doors and windows. But one often overlooked expense that can be reduced may come from your hot water heater.

The U.S. Department of Energy sites that tankless water heaters can save consumers up to 34 percent on their energy bill.

David Hamsen, service manager at Ragan Mechanical of Davenport, explains where the energy savings comes from.

"A typical house has a 40-50 gallon water heater, and the hot water is just sitting there when no one is using it. Tankless water heaters work on demand. When the faucet shuts off, it shuts off the burner," he said.

"The energy savings of it is definite. When you're not using it, it's not functioning," said Mark Kimbel of Mallard Plumbing of Rock Island.

Water heating bills are the third largest energy expense a home has and usually account for about 15 percent of utility costs.

"Many people aren't aware of how much energy a water heater uses," said Ken Berke, chief executive officer of [designerplumbing.com](#).

One downfall to tankless water heaters is difficulty that can arise when retrofitting them into an existing home.

"Depending on the size of the house, sometimes you have to install two or three. And, you have to redo gas, vents, and electricity," Kimbel said.

Hamsen added that tankless units still can be placed in the basement of a home, but often have to be located on an outside wall for venting purposes, which can present challenges in finished basements.

One other initial drawback is cost.

"A 40 gallon water heater costs about \$300-\$350. A tankless one costs \$600-\$1,200," Kimbel said.

There are a few other perks to using a tankless water heater. Tankless systems typically last about 20 years, which is double what a standard system usually will last.

Additionally, people who upgrade to them are eligible for a tax credit up to \$300, through the Energy Policy Act of 2005. "This type of system is not only good for consumers," Berke added, "it's also good on the environment."

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