

## Coordinating Your Lighting Logistics

BY JAMES DULLEY

**Dear Jim:** My electric bills are high, and I think some type of central lighting control might help me use fewer lights. Would this save electricity or cost more to operate the controls?  
- Andre F.

**Dear Andre:** Lighting can account for a substantial portion of your monthly electric bill, not to mention the cost to periodically replace lightbulbs and the cost of the fixtures. In many homes, the lighting wattage consumed in the kitchen exceeds the electricity used by a microwave oven.

There's also a secondary energy cost to lighting. Nearly all of the electricity used by incandescent lightbulbs ends up as heat in a room. Having several lightbulbs on can be equivalent to running an electric space heater on a low setting. During summer, this extra heat in your house makes the air conditioner run longer. During winter, the heat from lights helps heat your house, but at a much less efficient rate than a heat pump.

No doubt you've heard about compact



Central lighting control systems allow you to program special light levels for reading or watching movies.

fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs). By replacing incandescent light bulbs with CFLs your lighting produces 75 percent less heat, uses one-third less energy, and lasts much longer.

As you mentioned, Andre, central lighting controls are another efficient way to reduce lighting costs. The potential energy savings from installing even a simple central lighting control system are more than most people realize. Just count the lights in a typical home. If a lighting control system allows you to conveniently switch lights on only when needed, your total lighting use reduces greatly. Most lighting control units use very little electricity themselves.

In addition to energy savings, the safety and security of your home improves with a central light control system. For example, a system allows you to switch on exterior and interior lights from your car as you pull into your driveway. Variable timers switching lights on and off while you're away at night can make a would-be thief think someone's home.

Some lighting control systems allow you to select which indoor lights

### WHERE TO SHOP

The following companies offer efficient lighting controls:

- ▶ Intermatic, (815) 675-7000, [www.intermatic.com](http://www.intermatic.com)
- ▶ Jasco Products, (800) 654-8483, [www.jascoproducts.com](http://www.jascoproducts.com)
- ▶ Lightolier, (214) 647-7880, [www.lolcontrols.com](http://www.lolcontrols.com)
- ▶ Lutron, (610) 282-3800, [www.lutron.com](http://www.lutron.com)
- ▶ Wayne-Dalton, (800) 827-3667, [www.wayne-dalton.com](http://www.wayne-dalton.com)

turn on when you walk inside a dark house at night. With this feature, there's no need to keep several interior lights on when you leave home during the day and don't plan to return until evening. Keeping interior lights on for hours while you're gone doesn't avoid break-ins anyway: anyone noticing the same lights on for hours will realize the house is empty.

Central lighting systems also group various lights and brightness settings, a great and efficient convenience. Most control systems also include light-dimming features for lamps. For example, when reading in the evening program a "reading" button on the control to provide brightness where are you sitting, dimming the lights elsewhere—an ideal feature for second-floor bedroom areas. If you plan to watch movies in a room, program a "movie" button. This turns off and dims other lights for the best view of your television.

Built-in timer controls allow you to program the timing of lighting changes, or you can make changes manually. For example, you may want to have the lights slowly brighten in the morning at a certain time instead of being awakened by a loud alarm. Some experts claim this method of waking minimizes SAD (seasonal affective disorder) symptoms during winter.

So how does this all work? Many of the do-it-yourself central lighting controls use Z-Wave technology to communicate with individual lighting control modules throughout your house. The central control often runs on batteries. The lighting modules plug into standard wall

“Lighting can account for a substantial portion of your monthly electric bill, not to mention the cost to periodically replace lightbulbs and the cost of the fixtures.”

outlets, with lamps and appliances plugging into the module. Z-Wave wall switch modules are available to replace standard wall switches.

If you use CFLs, make sure your lighting controls work with them. Some controls require standard incandescent bulb filaments to operate properly. For lights which are only on for short periods of time or need to be dimmed often, incandescent bulbs may work best.

Simple control options include IntelliSight by Lightolier, an occupancy sensor which switches on lights when it detects someone in a room. Easy to install, IntelliSight includes dimming features. Another option, the Inter-matic InTouch Z-Wave system, makes set-up easy as well. **KCL**

Have a question for Jim? Send inquiries to: James Dulley, Kansas Country Living, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244 or visit [www.dulley.com](http://www.dulley.com).



This central lighting control system includes a central remote control, outlet modules, switch modules and plug-in modules.