

Cool Down Your Summer Energy Costs

How can I reduce energy costs during the summer?

When it's hot outside, any energy inefficiencies that exist in your home can make a bad situation even worse. In the summertime, air-conditioners are blaring, appliances like refrigerators are working on over-drive and we're not only sweating the heat, but our energy bills too. But don't panic. There are various things that we can do around our homes to ease energy consumption. By making a few modifications, we can cool down our energy bills and be more green at the same time—all without sacrificing our comfort! Check out the tips below for a few ways you can make some smart, energy-saving changes around your home this season.

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Attic Ventilation

Thermostatically controlled ventilating fans in attics are effective during the summer months. The temperature in the attic can reach 120-130 degrees F or more! The ventilator should be set for approximately 110 degrees F. The fans can be mounted through the roof or against a gable louver.

Ceiling Fans

Ceiling fans are especially helpful in buildings with high ceilings. In the summer, the fan should run at high speed to provide the desired breeze. Note that most ceiling fans are reversible.. One direction is appropriate for summer while the other is for winter.

Thermal Drapes

Thermal drapes over large glass areas such as patio doors are energy efficient in both winter and summer. In the summer, closing drapes during the daylight hours helps reduce the greenhouse effect.

Whole House Fans

Many older houses have whole house fans. These fans are very effective in providing a breeze. The breeze is provid-

ed by turning on the fan and opening doors and windows in the room to be cooled. Be careful to install a correctly sized whole house fan. Over-sized units can cause combustion appliances to back-draft, draw soot from fireplaces, etc.

Water Heater Temperature Setting

Setting the water heater at a lower temperature can often save five to ten percent of the energy bill. If the house does not have a dishwasher or if the dishwasher is not used, the water heater should be set as low as possible and still maintain sufficient hot water for your family. Most fabrics do not require a high temperature during laundering. In no case do we recommend setting the water temperature above 120 degrees F. This is a safety consideration, particularly for children. Children are more prone to scalding injuries.

Timer for Electric Water Heater

If it's not in the budget right now to replace your water heater with an on-demand unit, it is possible to install a timing device on an electric water heater to activate the heating coils only during periods of high water usage. To

gain maximum benefit from this device, all of the activities that use hot water (bathing, laundry, dishwasher operation, etc.) should be included in one or two periods of the day.

Refrigerator Coil Maintenance

Vacuum your refrigerator's cooling coils. (This should be done every three months). Excessive dust buildup will reduce the energy efficiency and life expectancy of the compressor. Make sure there are no gaps in the door seal. You can test this by placing a dollar bill in between the seal (do this on the top, side and bottom of door). If you can easily pull out the bill, it's time to replace the seal.

Air-Conditioning Operation Tips

Inspect and maintain your cooling system. Cleaning and replacing clogged air filters can reduce cooling costs up to 10 percent. Shade your air conditioner from direct sunlight. Adjust your air conditioner's thermostat when you go out, and shut your system down when you are away for extended periods. When the system is in use, close all windows, doors and chimney dampers and close off unused rooms.