

Conservation Tips For Your Home

Weatherization

- Weatherstripping and caulking can help keep warm air in and cold air out.
- Current standards call for at least R-30 in the attic, R-13 in the walls, and R-19 in the floor.
- Because up to 20 percent of the heat inside a typical house is lost through the windows, check the weatherstripping and caulking around doors and windows.
- Curtains or blinds should be opened during the day to let sunlight in, which will also help heat the home. Curtains should be closed at night to act as additional insulation for windows.

Appliances

- When not in use, turn off lights and appliances.
- Some newer TVs, VCRs and other electronic appliances have a "sleep" or "stand-by" mode that allows them to start immediately when you turn them on. However, that means they are constantly drawing a small amount of energy. When possible, you should switch this option off.
- Use appliances such as dishwashers, washing machines, and clothes dryers only when they are full, and preferably before or after the peak hours of 4-8 p.m., when demand for electricity is highest.
- Refrigerators usually consume the second most amount of energy in a home. (No. 1: the heating/air conditioning system.) Help the refrigerator maintain its efficiency by cleaning the coils at the back or bottom of the unit.
- Don't let children stand in front of an open refrigerator while they are deciding what they want to eat. Every time you open a refrigerator door, the compressor has to run for 8-10 minutes to keep the inside cold.
- When you are ready to replace an appliance, seriously consider purchasing an Energy Star® model. Energy Star® appliances are between 15 percent to 40 percent more efficient than older models, and will save you energy for years to come.
- Replace incandescent lights with compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs). Newer CFLs consume about 20 percent of the energy incandescent lights use and last ten times longer, yet produce the same amount of light. If you replace just five 100-watt incandescent bulbs with five comparable 23-watt CFLs, you will save about \$100 over three years. Discounts on CFLs may be available at local retailers.

Home Office

- When not in use, turn off home office equipment, including computers, monitors, printers and faxes.
- Some newer computers and other electronic equipment have a "sleep" or "stand-by" mode that allows them to start immediately when you turn them on. However, that means they are constantly drawing a small amount of energy. When possible, you should switch this option off.
- When you are ready to replace a piece of electronic equipment, seriously consider purchasing an Energy Star® model. Energy Star® equipment are between 15 percent to 40 percent more efficient than older models, and will save you energy for years to come.

Water Usage

Avoid using large amounts of water during peak periods. A tremendous amount of electricity is used to run the numerous pumps that obtain, purify and bring water to your house and then transport wastes to your regional water utility.

Because energy prices are highest during peak hours, it costs your local water and wastewater utility more to run the water pumps during those hours. These costs -- along with the higher energy costs that are impacting your water and wastewater utility -- are eventually passed down to you.

Here are some water wise tips that'll help conserve energy:

- Plan ahead so that clothes and dishes are washed in the late evening.
- Water your lawns and gardens between 10 p.m. and 10 a.m., and spread out the watering times in that wider window of opportunity, not just the 5 a.m. to 8 a.m. period.
- Try hanging clothes outside to dry (they will smell better too).

Heating Systems

- For every two degrees that you lower your thermostat during the winter, you save approximately 10 percent on your heating bill.
- Set and keep the thermostat on a gas or electric heater at 68 degrees when the home is occupied, and 55 degrees at night or when it's unoccupied.
- A clock-thermostat can be pre-programmed to the above settings so you don't have to remember to change it. You can even set it to pre-heat your home before you get up in the morning or before you get home in the evening.
- If you have a heat pump, set the lower temperature at 63 degrees, since heat pumps are designed to maintain temperatures within a narrower range.
- Don't close doors or shut off registers in rooms, as this puts added strain on the central system.
- If you notice little or no air coming from some registers - or that some rooms are colder than others - this could indicate a problem with the ducts. It's estimated that about 20 percent of homes have substantial duct leaks.
- If you suspect duct leaks, have a licensed HVAC contractor check your entire system.
- Open drapes and/or shades on sunny days to let in the sun's heat. Close them at night and on a cloudy day.
- Close the damper and cover the fireplace when not in use. Be sure that any fire has been completely extinguished.
- Get the heating system professionally checked once a year and change filters regularly to keep the unit running efficiently.

Portable Heaters

- Using portable heaters can be costly. Use them only to warm rooms that don't get enough heat or in homes without central heating systems.
- Turn off portable heaters when the room is unoccupied.
- If possible, purchase the type of heaters that sound an alarm or turn off automatically if they are tipped over.
- Never use propane heaters, hibachis, barbecues, or any heater with an open flame indoors. These heaters produce carbon monoxide, which is a clear, odorless gas that can suffocate humans and animals.

Water Heaters

- Newer water heaters may have insulation built into the unit - check the owner's manual to determine if additional insulation can be added.
- Wrap the water heater with a water heater blanket to keep heated water warm.
- Lower the temperature on the water heater to about 120 degrees F. This is sufficient for most household tasks and it will allow the water heater to save energy.
- You should install low-flow showerheads, and fix any leaky faucets.
- A small drip can be the equivalent of wasting a bathtub full of hot water each month.
- Obviously, any hot water you can save not only reduces your energy bill for heating the water, but reduces your water bill as well.

Keeping Yourself Warm

- Wear heavier clothing indoors during cold winter days and nights. Layering clothes helps trap heat near your body so the rest of the house doesn't need to be as warm.
- Add an extra blanket to your bed, so the rest of the house doesn't need to be kept as warm during the night.
- Avoid staying in one position for too long. Exercise and activity generate body heat.

Cooling

The most important factor in cooling your home is not to let it heat up. Good insulation, caulking and weather stripping, as well as overhangs, awnings and shades serve to keep heat outside during the summertime. And, limit the use of household appliances that emit heat.

The following tips will also help keep you cool this summer.

- Keep windows closed during the heat of the day.
- Draw blinds and draperies during the day to keep the heat out.
- Set the thermostat at 78 degrees or higher in the summer. You will save about 5 to 10 percent on the operating cost of your air conditioner for every two degrees of cooling you are willing to give up.
- Change your air filter regularly. An air conditioning unit with dirty filters can use 5 to 10 percent more energy than necessary.
- Use small fans, box fans or ceiling fans instead of the central air conditioning unit when you plan to stay in one room for an extended period of time.
- Avoid keeping unnecessary lights turned on.
- Give appliances a break during hot summer afternoons and evenings.