

12 easy do-it-yourself tips

Save money on your electricity

The following tips will help you and your family control your energy costs. Most are simple, everyday practices or do-it-yourself projects. Over time, you'll begin to see your efforts rewarded with lower electric bills.

\$ Clean or replace air conditioner, heat pump and furnace filters.

\$ If your attic insulation isn't at least R-30, replacing or upgrading it to R-30 can be the single most important thing you can do to control your heating and cooling costs, and you probably can do it yourself.

\$ Inspect your home's weatherstripping and caulking. If hot or cold weather has caused them to crack and deteriorate, repair or replace them.

\$ Dry only complete loads of clothes, and dry several loads one after another so your dryer doesn't have to reheat.

\$ Make up your waterbed. The covers will insulate it, saving up to one-third of the energy it uses.

\$ Where appropriate, replace short-lived, inefficient incandescent light bulbs with long-lasting, energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs. Although they cost more to purchase, fluorescent bulbs last ten times longer than comparable incandescent bulbs and use only a third as much electricity. The best targets for replacement are 60- to 100-watt bulbs used several hours a day. Measure the fixtures to make sure they'll accommodate compact fluorescents, which are slightly larger than incandescents.

\$ If your home has a crawlspace, make sure your floor is properly insulated to at least R-19 and make sure a vapor barrier has been installed to keep humidity and moisture out of your home.

\$ Set your heat pump thermostat to 78 degrees in the summer and 68 degrees in the winter. You'll save 3 to 5 percent on air conditioning costs for each degree you raise the thermostat, and about 2 percent off your heating bill for each degree that you lower the thermostat.

\$ Whenever possible, use the microwave instead of the oven or stove burners.

June 2000

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 Install a whole-house or attic fan for summer cooling without an air conditioner; however, don't operate fans while using an air conditioner.

 Plant shade trees and shrubs around your house, especially on the west side, to reduce your air conditioning costs.

 Replace aging, inefficient appliances. Even if the appliance has a few good years left, replacing it with a top-efficiency model will save money in the long run. 

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