



Tips to Reduce Summer Cooling Costs and Save You Money

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, 49 percent of the average home's electric bill is spent on heating and cooling. Though July has been cooler than average, the "Dog Days" of summer still lie ahead.

To help offset the anticipated increase in your electric bill that comes with running your air conditioner, Progress Arkansas has developed the following list of easy, low-cost steps that you can take to reduce your electric bill.

- Set your thermostat to 78 or the highest comfortable temperature. Each degree cooler than 78 will increase your bill as much as 3 percent. If you're going to be away for an extended period, set your air conditioner to 80 degrees or higher.
- Don't constantly move the thermostat up or down throughout the day as this wastes energy and money
- Install a programmable thermostat so you can set the air conditioning higher when you are away from home.
- Install compact fluorescent light bulbs in the fixtures you use most. Incandescent light bulbs produce 10 percent light and 90 percent heat.
- Position lamps and televisions away from your thermostat.
- Avoid running heat-producing appliances (e.g. ovens, clothes dryers) during the hottest times of day if you can avoid it.
- Use moveable blinds, window shading film or awnings on windows that receive excessive sun in the late afternoon.
- Use fans with your air conditioning to move air throughout your home, but turn them off when you are not in the room.
- Keep air conditioner filters clean. Aluminum mesh filters should be washed and fiberglass filters should be replaced monthly.
- Leave storm windows and doors closed when the air conditioner is on.
- Use kitchen and bathroom exhaust fans to remove excess heat and humidity caused by cooking, laundering and bathing.
- Seal and weather-strip doors and windows to ensure your home retains as much cool air as possible and blocks warm air from entering.
- Turn down the temperature on the water heater to 115 degrees
- Turn off computers, monitors, printers and televisions during periods of non-use.
- Use your microwave, toaster oven, slow cooker, broiler oven or other energy saving appliances for cooking food. They use half the energy of a regular oven and keep your kitchen cooler.
- Use your outdoor grill to cook dinner to prevent heating up the kitchen.
- Avoid using extension cords with appliances as this reduces the efficiency of the equipment.
- Take advantage of natural daylight instead of artificial lighting, but avoid direct sunlight.
- Wash only full loads, and consider air drying dishes and clothes.
- Take short showers instead of baths.
- Minimize activities that generate a lot of heat, such as running a computer, burning open flames, running a dishwasher and using hot devices such as curling irons or hair dryers. Even stereos and televisions will add some heat to your home.