

SIMPLY BETTER WAYS TO SAVE ENERGY AND MONEY YEAR-ROUND.



The Texas Business Development Center
"Empowering Businesses to Succeed"
(866) 258-7095 toll free
www.GoTexasPower.com



There are many ways to save energy. And with electricity being such an important part of our lives, sometimes it's easy to take it for granted. We forget that we actually control our own energy use and consumption.

There are many proven ways to save energy and therefore save money on your electric bills each month. And in an effort to be Simply Better, we're sharing with you the easiest and most common ways to save. Use this energy-saving brochure as a guide on how to save more every month on your electric bills.

ELECTRIC WATER HEATING



Most hot water heaters can be expected to last 10 to 15 years. Even if your older water heater seems to be working well, you might consider replacing it with a newer, high-efficiency unit. In addition, here are some other things to consider:

- A leaking hot water faucet will waste electricity because your water heater is running continuously to keep heating the water that is leaking.
- A five-minute shower using a flow restrictor in the shower head uses less water and energy than a bath.
- If the water heater has overhead pipes, heat may migrate in the water lines when hot water is not in use. The heater must make up for this heat loss. Install a heat trap, which is a loop or a U-shaped kink in the pipe, near the water heater.
- A water heater located outside the living space costs more to operate than one centrally located. The point of most frequent hot water usage is in the kitchen. The bathroom uses a larger quantity at less frequent intervals. Locate the water heater within 20 feet of the kitchen.
- To save energy, do not set water heaters above 140° F.
- Flushing two to three gallons of water from your electric water heater annually will extend the life of the unit and provide greater efficiency.
- One of the easiest ways to save heating energy is to wrap an insulation blanket around the water heater. They are easy to install and can cut electricity by as much as 10 percent. Before installing an insulation blanket, be sure to read all the manufacturer's literature. Many tanks are already insulated and do not require additional insulation. Also, insulate the hot water line leading away from the water heater.

14 to 20
percent of
total electricity
used in the
home comes
from heating
water.

LIGHTING



Incandescent bulbs may be replaced with smaller-wattage bulbs that produce the same light. Compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs are extremely energy efficient and last longer than traditional incandescent bulbs. For example, a 75-watt incandescent bulb can be replaced with a 15-watt compact fluorescent bulb with very little difference in light output.

Six percent of monthly energy consumption comes from lighting. Replace your current bulbs with smaller-wattage CFL bulbs.

CEILING FANS



Ceiling fans help reduce energy consumption when used in conjunction with the air conditioner or heater. They are capable of moving large amounts of air using small amounts of energy. During hot months, moving air makes a room feel cooler, even with a higher thermostat setting. An 80° F room can feel like a cooler room without the additional burden on your air conditioner.

In the winter, heat tends to rise and form pockets of warm air near the ceiling. A slow-moving ceiling fan helps force air downward, distributing heat more evenly. Often, a 68° F or lower thermostat setting feels warmer.

SHADING

Homes with numerous windows should use blinds, solar screens, shades, draperies or awnings to block direct sunlight and reduce the amount of heat entering your home. Remember that all heat buildup in the home has to be removed by the air conditioner. In the winter, open drapes and blinds to get the full benefits of radiant heat from the sun. Whether heating or cooling, remember to close windows and doors when your heating or cooling system is in operation.

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WINDOWS

Windows can account for 10 to 20 percent of your heating and air conditioning bill due to air leaks. Close your curtains and shades during the hottest part of the day during the summer and at night during the winter. Installing exterior or interior storm windows can reduce heat loss by 25 to 50 percent.

10 to 20 percent of your heating and air conditioning bill comes from your window insulation.



YOUR HEATING & COOLING SYSTEM



The electric heating and cooling system will use more electricity than all other appliances in your home. There are several ways to control the amount of electricity used without sacrificing comfort.

- The temperature you choose is critical. Install a programmable thermostat to control your temperature settings day and night. The recommended summer thermostat temperature setting is 78° F. For each degree the thermostat is set below 78° F, the energy use increases by about 3 percent. In the winter, the recommended setting is 68° F. For each degree above that, the same increase in energy use applies. You can save 2 percent on your heating bill for every degree you reduce your thermostat at night.

A maintenance check on your entire system once a year can save 10 percent on operating costs.

- If you're gone during the day, raise the air conditioner thermostat by 5 degrees before leaving. If the home will be vacant for several days, turn the air off.
- If you are using central heating and cooling, completely closing off one 100-square-foot room in an 1,800-square-foot home could save about 4 percent on heating and cooling costs. The thermostat should not be in the room you close off, and no more than 20 percent of the total living area should be closed off.
- We recommend a minimum Seasonal Energy Efficiency Rate (SEER) of 12 for central air conditioners and heat pumps. Units with a high SEER can reduce the amount of electricity needed to cool a home.
- Replace your furnace and air conditioning filter monthly. If you have reusable filters, clean them monthly.

WEATHERIZE YOUR HOME



- Caulk and weather-strip doors and windows that leak air. One exterior door with an 1/8" gap all around is the same as having a 6" hole in your wall. Shine a flashlight at night over all potential gaps while a partner observes the house from outside. Large cracks will show up as rays of light. Shut your doors and windows on a piece of paper placed on the window track or door jamb. If you can pull the paper out without tearing it, you're losing energy.
- Caulk and seal air leaks around exterior openings, over cabinets and where plumbing, duct work or electrical wiring penetrates through exterior walls, floors, or ceilings.
- Install foam gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on exterior walls.
- Look for dirty spots on your insulation, which often indicate holes where air leaks into and out of your house. Seal them by stapling sheets of plastic over the holes and caulking the edges of the plastic. Never cover openings associated with lighting, such as recessed lighting.
- Install storm windows over single-pane windows or replace with double-pane windows.
- You can lose as much as 60 percent of your heated or cooled air before it reaches the vent if your ducts are in your attic or crawl space and they aren't insulated.

About 10 percent of energy can be saved by reducing air leaks in your home. Air infiltrates into and out of your home through every hole and crack around doors and windows.

REFRIGERATORS & FREEZERS



Location is important. A refrigerator that is older than 15 years can be using as much as 20 percent of a home's electricity. Factors such as whether the unit is in an air-conditioned area, the garage, near an outside door or near another appliance that heats – such as an oven – will determine the running time, and ultimately the electric consumption.

Operating costs can be kept at a minimum if you:

- Check gaskets for a tight fit; replace when needed.
- Clean condenser coils at least twice a year.
- Keep doors closed as much as possible.
- Remove and return as much food at one time as possible.
- Don't crowd food; leave space for air circulation.
- Allow hot foods to cool before placing in the refrigerator or freezer.
- Keep the refrigerator temperature between 38° F and 42° F and the freezer at 0° F.
- Don't allow frost to exceed 1/4" for manual defrost.
- Keep your freezer two-thirds to three-fourths full.

Refrigerators and freezers are among the top energy users of all the appliances in your home.

DISHWASHERS



- Washing a dishwasher load of dishes uses about 9.9 gallons of water. Washing by hand uses an average of 15.7 gallons.
- Always run a full load and use a shorter cycle.
- Cancel the drying cycle and allow the dishes to air dry.

WASHERS & DRYERS



- Cut your energy use in half by washing clothes in cold water instead of warm or hot.
- Wash and dry only full loads.
- Dry towels and heavier cottons in a separate load from lighter-weight clothes.
- Don't over-dry. If your machine has a moisture sensor, use it.

About 90 percent of energy used for washing clothes is for heating the water.

SWIMMING POOLS & SPAS



- Check your swimming pool pump motor for proper operation. Also, reduce the running time of your pump to only what it takes to maintain the cleanliness of your pool. To help do this, install a timer on your pump.
- When purchasing a spa or pool, look for insulation applied directly to the fiberglass or wood that holds the water. This slows heat loss and helps maintain water temperature.
- Cover your spa or pool with an insulated cover when not in use. Reduce the temperature or turn off the heater between use.

Reduce the operating time of your pool filter to four to five hours, and only during off-peak time.