

Keeping Your Cool and Your Cash

Summer heat challenges our attempts to stay cool and comfortable. It can also mean facing high electric bills. A few simple changes can add up to savings on home utility bills. Check out these suggestions and links for ideas about how to reduce your electricity costs this season.

Simple Things Matter

Many solutions to help reduce electric bills are simple and easily put into practice. Try these ideas for quick no-cost and low-cost conservation.

- Turning off lights when a room is unoccupied offers surprisingly effective results.
- Use ceiling fans only in rooms that are occupied and turn them off when no one is home. Fans make a room feel cooler to people and pets, but don't reduce air temperature.
- Keep your air-conditioner clean and clear of debris. Washing the outside coils and keeping plants away from the base will prevent air flow blockage.
- Refrigerators and freezers operate most efficiently when full. Keep them as full as possible, using bottles filled with water to fill space.
- Use dishwashers and clothes washers/dryers at night. Doing so keeps your home cooler and avoids straining the power grid during the peak use period between 4PM and 6PM.
- Use power strips. Even when turned off, many electronic devices and home office equipment can continue to consume power when plugged into an outlet. Turning off the power strip prevents machines from draining power in standby mode.

Changes to Consider

If you can spend a little to save a little, the marketplace offers products designed with efficiency in mind.

- Replacing the five most often used incandescent bulbs in a home with compact fluorescent light bulbs can save an average of \$60 in one year.
- Heating water can account for 14 - 25% of the energy consumed in your home. Monthly water heating costs may be reduced by the choice of which water heater http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/your_home/water_heating/index.cfm/mytopic=12770 is used and by adopting energy-efficient water heating practices http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumer/your_home/water_heating/index.cfm/mytopic=13030
- When purchasing appliances and home electronics, choose models labeled with the Energy Star rating. These products meet the strict efficiency criteria established by the U. S. Department of Energy.

An Audit You'll Welcome. Really.

For additional savings and help locating points of energy inefficiencies, consider a home energy audit. Home energy audits assess the amount of energy your home consumes and evaluate what actions you can take to make your home more efficient. An audit will identify problems that may, when corrected, add up to significant cost savings over time.

Audits pinpoint areas where a home is losing electricity, determine the efficiency of a heating and cooling system, and determine a conservation plan of action. Check out TexasEfficiency.com to learn more about the services available to homeowners.

Following these simple remedies can help us all stay cool and rein in utility bills this summer. If you have questions or would like more information about energy efficiency, please contact my office at 214-370-8305.

Sources:

US Department of Energy
Public Utility Commission of Texas