



E-Conservation

power to control what you spend

Ways to reduce summer cooling costs

“Close that door – we’re not paying to cool the great outdoors!” If you’ve ever heard those words, you know that your mother was trying to conserve energy and save some money during the hot summer months. And Mom was right – cutting back on cooling costs can make a big dent in the household budget. Heating and cooling costs more in dollars than any other system in your house.

“Consumers spend approximately 44 percent of their total energy costs on heating and cooling their homes,” says Sarah Kirby, Associate Professor and Housing Specialist with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service. (The average annual cost for heating and cooling a home is \$1,900.) You can, however, reduce that cost by properly maintaining your home and selecting equipment and products with an eye toward energy conservation.

Lowering your cooling bill also means that your household is using less energy, which reduces greenhouse gas emissions and contributes to a healthier environment.

Keeping the power bill low

So just how do you reduce your energy demands this summer? Simple solutions such as improving your home’s insulation and more involved projects such as upgrading your HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) system can help reduce your home’s need for energy, and therefore your energy bill.

- Use the air conditioner only when necessary. If the breeze outside is pleasant, open a window.
- Use ceiling fans and other cooling fans to circulate air, but turn fans off when no one is in the room.
- Educate family members about energy conservation – keep doors and windows shut while the air conditioner is running.
- Schedule regular check-ups and maintenance for your heating/cooling units by a qualified heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) technician.
- Clean or replace unit filters every month.
- Keep air registers open, clean and free of furniture, carpeting, or drapes.
- Use a programmable thermostat. In the summer, set your thermostat to 78 degrees F, or your highest comfortable setting. For each degree you raise your thermostat, you can reduce your cooling costs by as much as 3-5 percent.
- Use kitchen and bathroom ventilation fans wisely – use them for short periods to circulate air as necessary. Running them for extended periods uses energy unnecessarily and allows cool air to escape outside.
- Use shade trees and other landscape features, awnings, and window coverings to keep the sun from overheating your home.

Buying a new cooling system

If your HVAC unit is old and inefficient, you may want to consider replacing it. Replacing an old unit can save as much as 50% on your cooling and heating bills. When replacing a unit, look for the Energy Star label. This label identifies products that meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the EPA and US Department of Energy.

While the purchase price of an Energy Star unit may more initially than others, your savings will be experienced over the life of the unit. Energy Star Products cost less to operate over time. To learn more about Energy Star products, see www.energystar.gov.

Keeping the cool in

Leaks around windows and doors mean that cool air is getting out. Some leaks will be apparent to homeowners, but frequently larger leaks in the attic and basement lose more cool air than the obvious ones. Homeowners can frequently find large gaps around pipes, light fixtures, chimneys, and soffits. Some sealing projects are appropriate for do-it-yourselfers, while others may require the assistance of a professional.

Reducing your energy needs in the summer benefits you, the consumer, and the larger community. Keeping your cooling bill in check leaves more money for summer vacations, and reducing your energy needs means cleaner air for everyone. For more information on energy conservation tips for your home, contact your local Cooperative Extension Center. For more information about your county center visit our county centers website. <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/index.php?page=countycenters>

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