



Year-Round Energy Saving Tips

FACT SHEET

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The greenest energy is the energy you don't use. To cut down on your utility bills and conserve energy, check out our tips below.

Spring and Summer

Schedule HVAC maintenance. Before the hot weather hits, have an expert check your equipment's performance. An HVAC technician can tell you when to replace your old cooling unit with a new energy-efficient model.

Clean filters. Whether your air conditioner is old or new, clean your unit's filter. Do it before turning it on and then periodically after that. It's an easy way to improve the unit's performance and to save energy.

Make sure your AC is sized properly for the space to be cooled. Contrary to popular belief, a larger unit will not cool a room better. A properly-sized unit will be more efficient and keep the space at a constant temperature.

Replace your thermostat. If you want more control of your energy bills, replace your old thermostat with a programmable one. Even better, get a smart thermostat, which can cut your heating and cooling costs by up to 20 percent.

Use fans. Fans alone aren't adequate in a heat wave, but they can be used effectively in tandem with an air conditioner. Run a ceiling fan counter-clockwise, from your position looking up at it, to create a downdraft, and turn off your fan when you leave the room. (Fans cool people, not rooms.)

Be safe. Raising your thermostat by two degrees and using a fan can lower air conditioning costs by up to 14 percent over the summer. But be smart about it—don't raise the temperature to an unsafe level. CUB recommends setting your thermostat at 74-78 degrees when you're at home.

Avoid hot tasks. Delay heat-producing tasks, such as dishwashing, baking, or laundry, until the cooler night or early morning hours. Consider grilling out to keep the kitchen from overheating and your AC from over-working. If grilling isn't for you, make meals in the microwave.

Use LED light bulbs. They last 10-25 times longer than incandescent bulbs, save you \$30-\$80 over their lifetime and don't heat up your home.

Be a good neighbor. Make sure you and your neighbors have a safe and cool place to stay during hot weather. Illinois has free cooling centers. If those aren't open, movie theaters, shopping malls, public libraries and the homes of friends and family can be cool places of refuge.

Fall and Winter

Furnace inspection. Have a certified heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) contractor inspect your furnace. If your furnace is 15 years or older, you may want to consider upgrading to a newer system.

New filters. A clean filter helps your HVAC system operate at its best and last longer. You should change your filter as often as every three weeks to as little as every six months. This depends on various factors, like how often you actually use your system to what kind of unit you have (room air conditioners, gas furnaces, etc.) If you have pets or allergies, you may need to replace your filters more often.

Adjust your thermostat. According to Energy.gov, you should set your home to 68 degrees when you are home and awake. When you're asleep or away, you can turn it lower. Our friends at the Citizens Utility Board in Minnesota suggest turning the thermostat down 10 degrees when you leave your home from your usual temperature. Dropping 10 degrees for at least eight hours a day could save you almost 10 percent on your bill over the course of a year. NEVER go below 55 degrees, because you could freeze your pipes. (Note: If your home is WiFi-enabled, a smart thermostat can help control your home's temperature and cut heating and cooling costs by up to 20 percent.)

Outdoor faucets off. Running or leaky outside faucets can cause pipes to freeze and explode. Flushing outside faucets and then turning the water off before winter is a great way to remove any excess water that could freeze up later.

Be careful with your space heater. If you use a space heater, place it on a hard, level surface away from kids, pets and flammable objects, and don't leave it on overnight. Also, plug it directly into the wall outlet. It also recommends buying a unit with a safety switch that automatically shuts off the heater if the unit is tipped over.

Dirty chimneys account for 27 percent of home-heating fires. If you only use your fireplace during the heating season, get it cleaned once a year to prevent dangerous build up. When you're done using the fireplace, close the damper so warm air doesn't escape up the chimney.

Don't overwork your heating system. Close blinds as an extra layer of protection against icy night winds. But open them during the day so sunlight can help heat your home. Clear radiators, registers, air returns and baseboards of obstructions. Dust, carpet and furniture can block the heat and leave a room chilly.