

City of Columbia, Missouri - Home Energy Conservation Tips

Low Cost Energy Efficiency Tips

You don't have to spend a lot of money to be energy efficient. Many of the items on the list below are free. Other efficiency measures listed require a very small investment and are easy do-it-yourself projects.

Windows/Doors

- Replace missing window putty or glazing as needed.
- Caulk window and door frames on the exterior.
- Replace weather stripping on exterior doors.
- Check door bottoms and thresholds to make sure air is not escaping. Replace when necessary.

Air Sealing

- FREE: Close fireplace damper when not in use.
- Install foam gaskets behind light switches or outlets located on exterior walls.
- Seal holes in the exterior walls, crawl space and/or basement where air conditioning and plumbing pipes penetrate.
- Install weather stripping around the perimeter of attic access hatches and pull down stairs.

Ductwork and Air Distribution

- FREE: Don't block vents and radiators with furniture, curtains or rugs.
- Seal leaky duct connections with duct sealing mastic. Do not use duct tape, as it will dry out and become loose.

Air Conditioning

- FREE: Set thermostat settings as high as possible while maintaining reasonable comfort levels while you're home.
- FREE: Set thermostats to 84 degrees when you're away from home, or install a programmable thermostat to do it automatically.
- FREE: For windows that receive direct sunlight, keep shades closed during the day.
- FREE: Remove weeds, grass, bushes, and other obstructions from around the condensing unit (the outdoor unit).
- Plant deciduous shade trees on the south and west side of your house to keep your house cool.
- Replace the system's filter every three months or when dirty.
- Have the refrigerant charge of your air conditioning unit checked annually by a qualified HVAC contractor.

Heating

- FREE: Set thermostat settings at 68 degrees or as low as possible while you're home.
- FREE: Set thermostats to 60 degrees when you're away from home, or install a programmable thermostat to do that automatically. Note: If you have a heat pump, make sure you install a programmable thermostat so that you can gradually warm the house back up before you return home.
- FREE: If you have a heat pump, do not make a lot of changes in the thermostat temperature during heating season unless you are going to be away for several days. Otherwise the auxiliary heat will come on which makes the system more costly.

- FREE: For windows that receive direct sunlight, keep shades open during the day and close them at night.
- Replace the system's filter every three months or when dirty.

Water Heating

- FREE: Reduce the temperature setting on your water heater to 120 degrees or less.
- FREE: Drain a quart of water from the water heater every 3 months to remove sediment.
- Wash clothes in cool or cold water whenever possible.
- Take 5 minute showers instead of baths. Install low-flow showerheads in your bathrooms.
- Install an insulation blanket around your water heater.

Appliances and Lighting

- FREE: Clean the coils on the bottom or the back of your refrigerator regularly.
- FREE: Recommended temperature for your refrigerator is 37 to 40 degrees and 5 degrees for the freezer.
- Test your refrigerator gaskets by closing the door over a piece of paper. If you can easily remove it with the door closed, consider replacing either the gaskets or the appliance.
- FREE: Inspect and clean your dryer vent tube on your dryer periodically. Built-up lint can lead to longer drying times and can be a fire hazard.
- FREE: Scrape your dishes rather than rinsing them before putting them in the dishwasher.
- FREE: Run washer, dryer and dishwasher only when you have full loads.
- Air dry dishes instead of using the drying cycle feature on your dishwasher.
- Install timers, photocells or motion switches on exterior lighting fixtures.
- Replace frequently used incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs.

Electronics

- FREE: Set your computer to hibernate or standby mode after 30 minutes of inactivity. Set your computer monitor to enter sleep mode after 5 minutes of inactivity. Screen savers generally do not save energy. Some graphic-intense screen savers burn twice as much energy than normal use.
- FREE: Unplug laptops or cell phone chargers when not in use. They draw power even when nothing is plugged into them.
- Since some appliances use electricity all the time, plug them into a power-saving electric strip or turn a regular strip off when the appliances are not in use.