

SAVING MONEY AS YOU KEEP COOL

Not that long ago, air conditioning was considered a luxury. These days, nearly two-thirds of American homeowners use air conditioners to beat summer's heat. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates that air conditioning alone uses about 5 percent of all of the electricity generated in the U.S.

Most people think that air conditioners lower the temperature in their homes simply by pumping cool air in. What's really happening is the warm air from your house is being removed and cycled back in as cooler air. This cycle continues until your thermostat reaches the desired temperature. Removing the moisture from the air is an important part of air conditioning. The humidity in your home should be between 40% and 60% year around.

The efficiency of air conditioners is rated by SEER (seasonal energy efficiency ratio) numbers — the higher the number, the more efficiently the air conditioner operates. The most efficient air conditioners earn ENERGY STAR certification. An ENERGY STAR air conditioner will have a minimum rating of 14 SEER. If you replace an air conditioner that is a 10 SEER with a 14 SEER, you will increase the efficiency of your air conditioning by 40%. Finally, selecting equipment that's the right size for the job is paramount. Not sizing your air conditioner properly will create less comfort and higher energy bills.



If your home has central air conditioning, there are several things you can do to improve its efficiency, resulting in more comfort for less money. One of the most important is having your air conditioner cleaned and checked by a technician each year to ensure that it's operating as efficiently as possible. Clean or replace the filter every month or according to the manufacturer's recommendations, and make sure the outside unit is free of dust and debris at least once a month.

One of the easiest ways to keep cooling costs under control is to ensure that your air conditioner doesn't have to work too hard. Set the thermostat at 76 degrees when you're at home, and set it higher when you're going to be away for at least 8 hours. Don't set the temperature so high that you don't get proper dehumidification. An air conditioner that


does not cycle enough will leave your home feeling damp and uncomfortable. Close drapes and blinds to keep bright daytime sunlight from heating up the house. Try not to use the dryer, dishwasher, stove or oven during the hottest part of the day.

To improve efficiency with room air conditioners, choose a unit with a variety of fan speeds, so you can select the amount of cooling that you need for the situation. If your air conditioner has a timer, set it to turn the air conditioner on an hour before you come home. In addition, be sure that your air conditioner is properly sealed in the window opening, so that hotter outside air won't find its way into your home. Finally, when fall arrives, remove the air conditioner from the window and properly seal the opening to prevent chilly drafts.

If you'd like to know more about keeping cool and keeping your energy bills low, contact the Eastern Illini Electric Cooperative marketing department for additional information at 800-824-5102 or visit our Web site www.eiec.coop. Eastern Illini is a Touchstone Energy cooperative and your connection to energy wise living.



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