

SUMMER TIPS

How to keep your home cool and save money

Today is the first day of summer, and hot weather has already arrived. In Texas, cooling and heating accounts for as much as 40 percent of annual home energy expenses. [Take Care of Texas](#) offers the following easy ways to keep your home cooler, helping you to save money and keep our air clean.

Use a programmable thermostat. Or adjust your thermostat during overnight hours or when no one is home. Try setting it to 78 degrees or warmer in the summer. Setting it to 7-10 degrees higher than you normally would for 8 hours a day can reduce energy consumption as much as 10 percent.

Maintain your air conditioner. A properly functioning air conditioner is an efficient one. Replace filters every month or two during the cooling season. And that big hunk of metal outside? That's the evaporator coil. It needs plenty of airflow, so clean it once a year. Remove debris and trim foliage too, leaving at least two feet of space around it.

You can also take the burden off your air conditioner by using other methods to keep the heat down in your home:

Use ceiling fans. They circulate the air in the house and allow you to raise the thermostat setting about 4 degrees without discomfort.

Limit the heat from your appliances. Cook outdoors on the grill, and try not to use the dishwasher, washer, and dryer during the heat of the day.

Move lamps, TVs, and other appliances away from the thermostat. The extra heat they produce can cause the air conditioner to run longer.

Install efficient lighting. It runs cooler. Only about 10 percent of the electricity that incandescent lights consume results in light — the rest is turned into heat.

Plant shade trees and install window blinds. With less sunlight shining on your house, the internal temperature can decrease by three to six degrees in the summer and save up to 25 percent in cooling costs. Use energy-efficient window treatments and close them during the day to block direct sunlight.

Weatherize your home. Find air leaks and seal them with caulk and weather stripping.

Seal your heating and cooling ducts. Leaky ducts can reduce your system's efficiency by as much as 20 percent. Start by sealing ducts that run through the attic, crawlspace, or garage using duct sealant or foil tape. Then wrap the ducts in insulation to keep them from getting hot.

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