

June: Turn Up Your Thermostat



Task: set your summer thermostat to 78° or higher.

Setting your summer thermostat to 79° will reduce your electricity bill by 8%; setting it at 80° will save you 16%. (Likewise, for every degree that you lower the temperature, you will increase your bill by 8%.)

(<http://www.firstchoicepower.com/save-green/appliance-energy-savings/energy-savings-thermostat.html>)

Advanced: turn off your AC altogether. If humidity is an issue, run the AC for 20-60 min. in the morning; keep the house closed and shades down during the day.

Tips for coping with less AC:

- Use ceiling fans.
- Close shades or drapes during the day to keep the sun out.
- Open windows at night, but close them by 10am to keep the day's heat out.

For more tips on alternatives to air conditioning, including links for information on installing ceiling fans, see <http://www.planetfriendly.net/airconditioning.html> and http://eartheasy.com/live_naturalcooling.htm

What else you can do:

- Seal air leaks and increase insulation to decrease the load on your air conditioner.
- Change or clean your filters monthly.
- Plant shade trees.
- Turn your AC off when you are not home.
- When returning to a warm home, do not set your thermostat extra low to cool it off faster. It won't help.
- Reduce humidity by taking short showers, using exhaust fan when cooking, and using moisture-absorbing pellets in closets (available in hardware stores).
- Reduce sources of heat in your home by minimizing indoor cooking, insulating your water heater, and turning off electronics.

In the typical home, air conditioning uses more electricity than anything else -- 16% of total electricity used. If you're serious about saving energy, address your cooling costs first, since that's what uses the most electricity.

A window unit AC uses 500 to 1440 watts, while a 2.5-ton central system uses about 3500 watts. A floor fan uses only 100 watts on the highest speed, and ceiling fans use only 15 to 95 watts depending on speed and size.

Energy Used for Air Conditioning

Almost one kilowatt-hour of electricity out of every five consumed in the United States in a full year goes to cooling buildings. Much of the nation's excess power-generating capacity, which sits idle until needed to satisfy quick spikes in demand, has had to be built because of air-conditioning.

The electricity used annually to air-condition America's homes, stores, offices, factories, schools, churches, libraries, domed stadiums, hospitals, warehouses, prisons and other buildings (not including what's used to cool manufacturing processes and military facilities) exceeds the entire electricity consumption of the world's second and fourth most populous nations -- India and Indonesia -- combined.

Air Conditioning in Cars. Government tests have shown that running an air-conditioner can decrease a car's fuel efficiency by 4 miles per gallon. Excess fuel consumption is lower on the highway, higher in the city and incalculable when the engine and AC are left running in a parked pickup truck to keep a Dachshund comfortable.

About 5.5 percent of the gasoline burned annually by America's cars and light trucks -- 7 billion gallons -- goes to run air-conditioners. That's equivalent to the total oil consumption of Indonesia, a petroleum-rich country with a population size comparable to ours.

About Refrigerants. In years to come, we may be cranking air-conditioners up as high as they'll go to provide some relief from human-fueled global warming. But that will only aggravate the crisis. Air-conditioning accelerates the greenhouse effect not only by increasing the use of coal and other fossil fuels but also by releasing refrigerants.

Since the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, there has been a major shift in types of refrigerants used in air-conditioning and refrigeration. In particular, highly ozone-threatening chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) are being phased out, most quickly in wealthier countries.

CFCs not only damage ozone, they also have the highest global-warming potential. But all commonly used refrigerants are greenhouse gases, and every pound produced is destined eventually to escape into the atmosphere during manufacture, use, recharge, recycling, disposal.

-from <http://www.alternet.org/environment/37882>

For more information:

- For startling information on the energy use air conditioners, see <http://michaelbluejay.com/electricity/cooling.html>
- great resource for all sorts of info re/ alternatives to AC: <http://www.planetfriendly.net/airconditioning.html>
- fun and informative website re/ electricity use and reducing it in home: <http://michaelbluejay.com/electricity/howmuch.html>
- information on the environmental impact of air conditioning (see above for excerpts): <http://www.alternet.org/environment/37882>