

June 23, 2009

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Sarasota County provides tips on hot weather energy savings

Continuing hot weather conditions can cause dramatic increases in power use as residents often turn up air conditioners and use them for longer periods than usual.

Here are some energy saving tips from Sarasota County to reduce power costs:

- Close shades or blinds to prevent the sun from adding more heat to the room.
- When using an air conditioner, set the thermostat no lower than 78 degrees. Each degree lower increases cooling costs by 6 percent. Turn it off when you leave home, and use a timer to pre-set it for 30 minutes before you return.
- If possible, use a fan instead of an air conditioner in a well-ventilated area. Fans use 70 to 90 percent less electricity than air conditioners.
- Use portable fans and/or ceiling fans to increase air circulation in areas where people spend time. Strategically placed fans can increase the effectiveness of central and window air conditioners. Use fans only when people are present.
- Turn off unused, non-essential appliances, including televisions and computers that are on “stand-by” mode. Even though they are not “on,” TVs and PCs still draw power.
- Use the energy saver option on your dishwasher. Operate dishwashers, washing machines and dryers with full loads.
- Wait to use heat-producing appliances like ovens, stoves, dishwashers, and clothes washers and dryers when it’s cooler in the late evening or early morning. This also reduces energy demand at peak times.
- Instead of using a kitchen oven, use a microwave or toaster oven or outside grill.

Residents also can take a number of steps to improve home energy efficiency:

- Seal gaps in windows and doors to keep the heat out.
- Keep filters in air conditioners clean to make them more efficient.
- Make sure your air conditioner (central or window unit) is shaded from the sun and clear of grass, weeds, shrubbery, or other obstructions so it has adequate ventilation and does not get overworked or overheated. Outside air conditioning coils should be kept clean with mild soap and water.
- Use a programmable thermostat, turning up the temperature setting and/or shutting off the air conditioner whenever possible.
- Add insulation, particularly attic insulation. Excessive heat can move into living spaces from outside, the attic, or a hot garage. Investing in an insulation upgrade often produces significant-enough energy savings to be recovered quickly. Good

insulation also increases home comfort and reduces or eliminates the problem of temperature variance on different levels, or in different parts, of some homes.

- Install more energy efficient windows because windows can be the source of large energy transfers. Many windows are designed and insulated to reduce air leakage. Also, many new windows contain thin, transparent window coatings that permit visible light to pass through them, but help block heat transfer.