



Energy Conservation Tips for Heating and Cooling

For a free Energy Tips booklet, contact Richland Energy Services at 942-7431 or email us at energyservices@ci.richland.wa.us

Heating Tips

- Heating is the single biggest energy use in homes. A well-maintained heating system will hold down fuel costs and provide reliable comfort. Check the filters in your warm air heating system monthly and replace or clean them when they become dirty. Have your heating system checked periodically by a licensed professional.
- Proper insulation in walls, ceilings and floors also significantly reduces the loss of heat to the outdoors. Insulation will pay for itself in fuel cost savings and home comfort.
- Storm windows and doors are big energy and money savers. They can reduce heating costs by as much as 15% by preventing warm air from escaping to the outside. Double glazed and thermo pane windows or even clear plastic across windows can minimize heat escape.
- The many small openings in a home can add up to big heat losses. Caulking and weather-stripping cracks in walls and floors, windows and doors will save fuel and money. Keeping the fireplace damper closed tightly when not in use will also result in heating cost savings.
- Letting sunlight in by opening curtains, blinds and shades over windows facing the sun helps keep your home warm and reduces heating needs. At night or when the sky is overcast, keeping drapes and curtains closed will help keep the warmth indoors.
- Dry air makes you feel colder than moist air at the same temperature. Maintaining home humidity will produce personal comfort at a lower thermostat setting and save money. Shallow pans of water near radiator tops or near warm air vents, or a room humidifier, will help raise humidity levels.
- Keeping your heating thermostat at the lowest temperature comfortable for you will save on heating costs.
- Insulate heating hot air ducts and hot water pipes that provide heat to the rooms in your home. This will reduce heat loss in areas that are not insulated and will help your heating system work more efficiently.

Cooling Tips

- Make sure your air conditioner is the proper size for the area you are cooling. The wrong size air conditioner will use more electricity and increase your energy bills. A unit that is too large for a given area will cool the area too quickly, causing the air conditioner to frequently turn on and off. If a unit shuts off quickly, chances are it hasn't been running long enough to reduce the room's humidity and you'll be uncomfortable. If your air conditioner is too small, it will run constantly on hot days without ever achieving good results.

- The location of your air conditioner has a lot to do with how efficient it will be. If you have a choice, locate your units on the north, east or the best-shaded side of your home. If the unit is exposed to direct sunlight, it has to work much harder and use more energy to cool your home. Keep shrubbery away from your air conditioner since it blocks vents and reduces the unit's ability to exhaust air.
- Regular maintenance will insure that your air conditioner operates efficiently throughout the summer. Check the filter once a month by holding it up to a bright light. If you can't see through it, it's time to clean or replace the filter. You can also check your owner's guide to find out how to safely clean the condenser coils and fins on the outside of the unit.
- On very hot days, you can save energy by closing the fresh air intake on your unit. Cooling fresh, warm outside air requires more electricity than re-cooling the air that is already circulating in your home.
- You can save on cooling costs by avoiding cooling rooms that are not occupied. If you like your home to be cool when you come home at the end of the day, special automatic timers for air conditioners are available that will turn the unit on before you arrive home.
- On hot summer days, the temperature in your attic can reach 150 degrees. Improving the ventilation or increasing the insulation in your attic will lower the temperature of the entire house and make your air conditioner's job a lot easier. Installing an attic fan that is controlled by a thermostat to exhaust the hot air or increasing the insulation factor in your attic can greatly improve the comfort of your home.
- Depending on the size of your home, you can save 3% on your cooling costs for every degree you raise your thermostat in the summer. Raising the thermostat from 73 to 78 degrees can mean savings of up to 15% in cooling costs.
- Fans can make your air conditioner's job easier while saving you money. Pedestal and ceiling fans improve the air circulation in your home, allowing you to raise the air conditioner's thermostat. In moderate heat, fans can sometimes completely replace air conditioners. Ceiling fans use only about one tenth the electricity of a typical home air conditioner.
- To stay most comfortable during the hottest hours of the day, do your cooking, laundry and bathing in the early morning or late evenings. These activities all increase the level of humidity in your home, making it less comfortable and forcing the air conditioner to work even harder. If other heat generating appliances, such as irons, ovens and blow dryers are used only in the early morning or late evening, your home will stay cooler.
- Drapes, shades and awnings shield windows from the hot sun, keeping your home cooler. Your storm windows also come in handy during the summer since they keep cool air in and hot air out. Weather-stripping and caulking windows and door frames will also keep cool air from leaking out. Certain reflective films can be used on windows to screen out the hot rays of the sun without reducing the amount of light you receive. And, when doors and windows are shut, your air conditioner will operate more efficiently.