

Daily Union Article

Saturday, June 2, 2018

Title: "Don't Let Summer Burn A Hole in Your Pocket"

Although we hit a bit of a cool spell, May sure gave us some sizzlin' hot days as well. I know when the electricity bill comes next week I will feel the pain in my pocketbook. The rule of thumb in my house is "no air conditioning until June" but the humidity and heat of early and mid-May was beyond my tolerance.

Even as I closed the windows and checked our central air, I began thinking "Where can we cut our electricity use to help offset the increased bill?" I began poking around on our K-State Resource and Extension resource page, and our national network of resources from Cooperative Extension agencies across the United States, and accumulated a nice list of good options.

- 1) Turn off lights when you are not using them. A single 100 watt bulb left on all night costs about \$25 over twelve months. Better yet, change out all your light bulbs. If you are still using incandescent bulbs, be aware that they cost 5 – 10 times in electricity of the original purchase price of the bulb itself. Additionally, compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) last longer and run without putting off as much heat as incandescent bulbs, which saves money over time.
- 2) Don't put lamps, or your television, near the room air-conditioning thermostat. It can cause the air conditioner to run longer due to the heat put off by these household items. The thermostat can sense the heat from these appliances and run your air conditioning unnecessarily.
- 3) Be aware of your thermostat setting. If you run your air conditioner, set it at 78°F instead of 72°F, you can save between 6-18% on your cooling bill. The smaller the difference between the indoor and outdoor temperatures, the lower your overall cooling bill will be. By setting your thermostat as high as you can comfortably handle, you will see more savings in your monthly bill.
- 4) Spruce up the landscaping around the outside of your home. Not only does this improve the curb appeal of your house, it can also reduce the heat that enters into your house. Well-placed trees can help add another layer of natural insulation to protect your house from those higher temperatures.
- 5) Using ceiling fans can allow you to raise the thermostat setting about 4°F because they give your body the illusion that it is cooler. However,

leaving fans on in a room that is not occupied actually raises your cost slightly when there is no benefit to someone feeling cooler.

- 6) Many ovens leak a considerable amount of heat around the door. The amount of heat you lose each time you open the door to check the food inside, the ovens interior cavity drops by 25°F. By using a microwave, toaster, or counter-top grill, you can still prepare tasty and healthy foods without adding excessive heat to the inside of your home. These appliances are also typically more energy efficient, as well.
- 7) Most households in the United States have at least one computer. Although these devices can save us money by comparison shopping, they most certainly can cost us money if we leave them on during the day. The estimated cost of leaving a computer on is about \$.21 per day, or about \$75 per year. Simply putting the computer in its "sleep mode" still uses electricity. It is wise to unplug ALL electronics and appliances when not in use.
- 8) Technology has greatly improved our ability to regulate the temperatures in our homes. Programmable thermostats can save up to \$150 per year on energy costs when they are used properly. Choose a programmable thermostat that can automatically turn off your cooling system when you are not at home, and turn your system on in time for you to arrive to a cooled house.

Source: <https://www.energy.gov/articles>

Keep a cool head and find ways to save on your summer electric bill by following some of these recommendations. For more ideas on how to stretch your family dollar, contact me at the Geary County K-State Research and Extension Office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!