

# Keeping Austin Green

## 101 Easy Ways to Conserve Energy In Your Home



### Small Appliances

- ➔ **Cook with small appliances.** Cook with your toaster oven, electric skillet, popcorn popper, and slow cooker for specialized jobs, rather than the range, since these small appliances use less energy.
- ➔ **Use the microwave instead.** The advantage of microwave ovens is shorter cooking times-and shorter cooking times save energy.
- ➔ **Clean or replace air filters.** Replace filters on exhaust hoods, humidifiers, vacuums, etc. Clogged filters impair performance and cause the units to run longer.
- ➔ **Run cold water for disposal.** Cold water saves energy and solidifies grease so that it will move through the food/waste disposal and pipes easier.

### Refrigerators and Freezers

- ➔ **Purchase an Energy Star® model.** Energy Star refrigerators and freezers can save you hundreds of dollars on your electric bill over the average 17-year life of the appliance.
- ➔ **Select the right size.** Determine your household's needs and then make a purchase. A unit that is too small will be overcrowded; one that is too large will waste energy.
- ➔ **Don't set the temperature colder than necessary.** Set the refrigerator temperature between 36° F and 42° F. Set the freezer control so the temperature is between -5° F and 6° F.
- ➔ **Clean the unit.** Clean the dust off the condenser coils, fins and evaporator pan and motor once or twice a year – a clean unit runs more efficiently. Unplug the unit and clean with a vacuum cleaner or long-handled brush.
- ➔ **Defrost a manual-defrost unit regularly.** Frost makes your unit work harder and wastes energy. Don't allow more than one-quarter inch of frost to build up.
- ➔ **A second refrigerator wastes energy.** You can spend up to \$120 in electricity a year using a second refrigerator or freezer. If you want to use a second refrigerator/freezer only during the holidays and for special occasions, turn it on one to two days before you need it.
- ➔ **Stay away from direct heat.** Place refrigerator/freezer away from direct sunlight and other heat sources such as ovens or ranges. Heat will cause the refrigerator to use more energy.

- ➔ **Do not place unit in unheated space.** Don't place your refrigerator or automatic defrost freezer in a garage, porch or other unheated space. If the temperature drops below 60° F, the compressor may stop running, causing the temperature inside the freezer compartment to rise. Stored food could spoil.

- ➔ **Check the tightness of the seals.** The refrigerator and freezer doors should seal tightly. Try sliding a dollar bill through the closed door-if you can move the bill, the seal is not tight enough.

### Dishwashers

- ➔ **Run full loads.** Always wait until you have a full load before running your dishwasher. Load according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- ➔ **Use short cycles.** Select the shortest cycle that will properly clean your dirty dishes.
- ➔ **Skip rinsing the dishes.** Rinsing dishes before loading them into the dishwasher wastes energy. If you must rinse, use cold water.
- ➔ **Clean the filter.** If your dishwasher has a filter screen, clean it regularly.

### Ranges & Ovens

- ➔ **Lower the heat.** Begin cooking on a higher heat setting until liquid begins to boil. Then, lower the temperature and simmer the food until fully cooked. A fast boil doesn't cook faster than a slow boil, but it does waste energy.
- ➔ **Don't peek in the oven.** Resist the urge to open the oven door while baking. The temperature will drop 25° F and takes additional energy to bring the oven temperature back up to the original cooking temp.
- ➔ **Use retained heat.** Turn off the cook top or the oven a few minutes before the food has completed cooking – retained heat will finish the job.
- ➔ **Select the correct pan size.** Your pan size should match the surface heating unit.
- ➔ **Put a lid on it.** Cook food and boil water in a covered container whenever possible.
- ➔ **Make sure oven seals tightly.** Check the seal on your oven door to make sure it is tight. Even a small gap is enough to allow some of the oven's heat to escape.

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- **Check oven temperature.** Test the temperature of your oven to be sure that the temperature setting matches the actual temperature in the oven.

## Washers & Dryers

- **Adjust the water-level.** Purchase and use a washer that allows you to control the load's water level. You can save energy by using less hot water for small loads.
- **Run full loads.** Don't waste energy by running partial loads in both your washer and dryer.
- **Wash in warm or cold water.** Use a hot water wash only when the greatest cleaning is needed.
- **Rinse in cold water.** The temperature of the rinse water has no effect on cleaning.
- **Place washer close to the water heater.** The water loses heat as it flows through the pipes. Also be sure to insulate the pipes running to your washer.
- **Don't over-dry clothes.** Over drying laundry uses more energy than is needed and it is hard on fabrics.
- **Clean the lint filter.** After each load, clean the filter to keep the dryer running efficiently.

## Water Heaters and Water Usage

- **Purchase an energy-efficient model.** It may cost more money initially, but in the long run it will cost less to operate.
- **Purchase the correct size.** Consider the hot water needs of your family. If your water heater is too large, you will waste energy; if it is too small, you will likely run out of hot water.
- **Have a contractor install your water heater near the kitchen.** The kitchen is the place where you use the hottest water. Placing the water heater close to the kitchen will save energy.
- **Insulate water pipes.** Use half-inch foam or pipe tape for insulation wherever pipes are exposed. On cold water pipes, insulate four to five feet nearest to the water heater.
- **Set temperature to 120° F.** If you have an electric water heater, you'll have to remove the cover plate of the thermostat to adjust the temperature. For safety reasons, turn off the water heater at the circuit breaker/fuse before changing the temperature.
- **Repair dripping faucets promptly.** If the faucet leaks hot water, you're wasting the water and the energy used to heat it. (One drop a second can waste up to 48 gallons a week!)
- **Install a heat loop or in-line trap.** If you're adding a new water heater to your home, consider having a heat loop or in-line trap installed. These mechanisms are inexpensive to install and keep hot water in the insulated tank rather than in the piping system.
- **Reduce deposits and build-ups.** Drain a bucket of water from the bottom of the water heater once or twice a year to reduce build-up of minerals. Don't drain it if you've used it for more than a year and never drained it before. (The faucet may have corroded shut and could break if you force it open.) Before draining water from an electric water heater, turn off the water heater at the circuit breaker/fuse.
- **Install energy-savers.** Use low-flow showerheads in all showers in your house, as well as faucet aerators on all faucets, to save energy.
- **Install a water softener.** Install a water softener to prevent mineral deposits from coating the elements, if you have hard water. This will save both energy and money, and will help prolong the life of your water heater.

## Humidifiers and Dehumidifiers

- **Purchase an Energy Star dehumidifier.** Energy Star qualified dehumidifiers will use 10-20 percent less energy than a conventional

model and offer the same features as conventional models.

- **Humidity makes your fell warmer.** Use a dehumidifier in the colder months. You'll be able to run your thermostat down to a lower temperature, save energy and still feel comfortable.
- **Dehumidifiers remove moisture.** Use a dehumidifier in the warm, humid months to remove moisture from the air. A dehumidifier works best when air can circulate freely through it. Place it away from walls and bulky furniture.
- **Place dehumidifier in the area with the highest humidity.** For safety reasons, don't place it directly in water or near your sump pump.
- **Check for frost build-up.** If your unit is running in temperatures less than 70° F, check it occasionally to see if frost is building up on the coils. If so, turn the unit off until the frost melts and the room is warmer.
- **Clean the unit.** Dust or vacuum the dehumidifier at least once a year before you plug it in. If your unit is difficult to clean, check the owner's manual.

## Lighting

- **Use Energy Star® compact fluorescent light bulbs.** Energy Star compact fluorescent light bulbs last longer and use up to 75 percent less energy than standard light bulbs. You can cut your electric bill by \$60 per year if you replace the standard bulbs in your five most frequently used light fixtures. Properly dispose of compact fluorescent light bulbs at your local household hazardous waste collection site.
- **Use natural lighting.** Open curtains and shades during the day instead of using lighting. Consider skylights and solar tubes during remodeling or new construction design. This allows the maximum use of natural daylight.
- **Plan your lighting.** Not every room needs the same amount of general light. Plan within a room to provide general background lighting and supplementary task lighting. A good lighting plan can reduce lighting costs and still provide all the light you need.
- **Use a single, high-watt bulb.** Using one high-watt bulb instead of several low-watt bulbs saves energy. Do not exceed the manufacturer's recommended wattage for the fixture.
- **Control outdoor lighting.** To assure only dusk-to-dawn use of your outdoor lights, control your fixtures with a photocell or timer.
- **Turn off lights.** Turn off lights when not in use, even for short periods of time. Turning lights off and on uses less energy than if they are left on all the time.
- **Install a timer on indoor lights.** Use timers to turn lights on and off to help regulate use.
- **Avoid long-life incandescent light bulbs.** Long-life incandescent light bulbs are the least efficient of the incandescent bulbs.
- **Consider LED (Light Emitting Diode) lighting.** LEDs are becoming more common for can track, under-cabinet, and holiday lighting. Initial cost is more, but the lights use 10 times less energy and last 50 times longer than incandescent lights. They use one-third the energy and last 5 times longer than compact fluorescent lights.
- **Position lights properly.** Try to illuminate the entire activity area without creating distracting glares or shadows. To do this, position your light source closer to the area you want lit. This saves energy by not over-lighting an unused area.
- **Adjust light level.** Higher light settings use more energy, so save energy by using dimmer controls, high/low switches, or three-way bulbs to adjust the level of light to exactly what you need.

## Central Air Conditioners

- **Purchase an energy-efficient model.** Select an energy-efficient central air conditioner by looking at the SEER (seasonal energy efficiency ratio) rating. The higher the rating, the more efficient the unit.

- ➔ **Choose the right size equipment.** Oversized equipment costs more money. A qualified heating contractor can determine the size of the equipment needed for your home. The contractor uses the size and configuration of your home to determine proper size.
- ⬆️ **Replace coils.** To maximize efficiency, change the indoor and outdoor compressor coils when replacing an older central air conditioner.
- ➔ **Keep the thermostat clear of heat.** Don't position heat producing devices such as lamps and TVs close to your thermostat. Heat from these devices could cause the thermostat to read a temperature higher than the true room temperature. This may lead to excessive cooling and wasted energy.
- ➔ **Get your unit tuned up.** Have your central air conditioner tuned up by a qualified heating contractor every other year. This can help the unit operate more efficiently and may prevent failure in the middle of peak cooling season.
- ⬆️ **Keep the condenser and filter clean.** Keep leaves, grass, and other debris away from the outside condenser. Also, clean the filter monthly, and replace it as needed. (Your central AC uses the same filter as your furnace.) A clean condenser and filter help the unit run more efficiently.
- ⬆️ **Change your thermostat settings.** Save 10 percent or more on your summer cooling costs by setting the thermostat to 76° F when at home and higher when you go away. Cooling the house when you return costs less than keeping it cool all of the time.
- 🔗 **Keep the sun out.** Closing blinds, shades, and drapes on the sunny side of your home during the day will help keep the house cooler, causing the air conditioner to use less energy in bringing the temperature to a comfortable level.
- ➔ **Cool only the rooms in use.** Close unused rooms to keep cooled air in areas where it is most needed.
- ➔ **Don't make more heat.** Delay chores that produce heat and moisture until the cooler parts of the day or evening. Limit dishwashing, laundering and cooking on hot, humid days. These activities make your room more uncomfortable and require your air conditioner to work harder.
- ➔ **Use the microwave.** Cook using your microwave oven rather than your standard oven or range. It creates less heat and humidity in your home.
- ➔ **Turn off electronics you are not using.** Don't leave electronics such as televisions, stereos, and computers on if you don't need them – they produce heat. Extra heat requires more energy to power the air conditioner and increases cooling costs.
- ➔ **Keep vents clear.** Keep furniture and drapes away from air vents. This allows the cool air to move out into the rooms and keeps your air conditioner from running more than necessary.
- ➔ **Ventilate your attic.** Reduce heat build-up in your attic by installing proper ventilation. This helps keep your house cooler during the summer. A qualified heating contractor can help you do this.
- ➔ **Keep the air conditioner out of the sun.** Locate the unit out of direct sunlight and avoid the south and west sides of the house. Placing the air conditioner in direct sunlight causes it to work harder to cool your home.

## Room Air Conditioners

- ➔ **Purchase an Energy Star® model.** Energy Star room air conditioners cost at least 10 percent less to operate than conventional models.
- ➔ **Use a timer.** Set the plug-in timer to turn off the air conditioner when you leave home and to turn it on just before you return.
- ➔ **Purchase a unit with varying fan speeds.** Use a room air conditioner with fan speed control. This allows faster cooling when needed and quieter, more efficient operation at other times.
- ➔ **Keep the unit centrally located.** To allow better air circulation, install your room air conditioner in the window or area of the wall that is nearest to the middle of the space being cooled.
- ➔ **Seal the unit.** Once a room air conditioner is in place, seal the space around it with rope caulk or some other sealant to prevent warm outside air from leaking in.
- ⬆️ **Don't set the thermostat at high initially.** When you first turn on your room air conditioner, set the thermostat at normal or medium. Setting it any colder won't cool the room any faster.
- ➔ **Keep the unit out of the sun.** Locate your room air conditioner on the shady side of your home. It will operate more efficiently in a cooler location.
- ⬆️ **Close the fresh-air vent.** Make sure the fresh-air vent is closed when the room air conditioner is operating so you aren't cooling outside air. Open the vent when the outside air is cooler to let in fresh air.
- ➔ **Remove the unit at the end of the cooling season.** Take your room air conditioner out of the window when the cooling season is over. If you must leave the unit in place, cover the outside of the unit with a weatherproof cover and fill any cracks round the unit with removable caulk.

## Fans

- ➔ **Use fans with your air conditioner.** Fans help reduce energy costs by circulating the cool air from your air conditioner. This allows you to raise the temperature and still be comfortable. Use oscillating fans for greater circulation.
- ⬆️ **Use ceiling fans for air circulation.** In hot weather, set the ceiling fan direction to blow air down. The air moving across your skin creates a cooling effect, allowing you to raise the temperature on your thermostat and still feel cool. In cold weather, set the fan to blow toward the ceiling. This pushes warm air away from the ceiling and evenly distributes heat in the room.
- ⬆️ **Use a whole-house fan.** These fans are mounted in the attic and ventilate your entire home. Be sure to open some windows before turning on a whole-house fan. A qualified heating contractor can help you determine if you need a whole-house fan.
- 🔗 **Maintain your fan.** Keep your fan in good working order. Check the manufacturer's recommendations for care and maintenance. This helps control the operating costs.

## Heating

- ➔ **Purchase an energy-efficient furnace.** Select an energy-efficient furnace model by looking for an AFUE (annual fuel utilization efficiency) rating of 90 percent or greater.
- ➔ **Maintain the furnace.** Clean your furnace filters monthly or replace if necessary. A clean unit runs more efficiently.
- ➔ **Use natural gas for heating.** Consider switching to a natural gas heating system. Natural gas is less expensive than other heating fuels.
- ➔ **Use insulation.** Insulate your attic to an R-value of 38 for a gas heated home and 50 for an electrically heated home; your walls to an R-value of 19; and your sill box (upper portion of your basement walls) to an R-value of 10. Proper insulation allows you to use less energy to keep your home warm.
- ➔ **Insulate around windows and doors.** Weather-strip and/or caulk all areas of noticeable leaks around windows and doors. Removable caulking is a good option for windows that you open in summer but not in winter.
- ➔ **Change your thermostat settings.** In the winter, set your thermostat at 60° F when you are sleeping or gone. Set the thermostat to 68° F when you are at home. This can save 10 percent or more on your heating bills every winter.
- ➔ **Turn down the thermostat when away.** If you are going to be away for an extended period of time, turn your thermostat down to save energy but never lower than 40° F. If you have delicate houseplants, keep the setting at 50° F or higher.

- ↗ **Let the sun in.** The sun's energy can have a noticeable effect on the temperature in your home, especially from windows facing south and west. Keep window shades and blinds open during winter months to let in the sun's radiant heat.
- ↘ **Warm with a space heater.** A portable space heater can heat a single room without using your furnace to heat the whole house. Using a space heater to heat all or most of your home costs more. Always follow the manufacturer's safety instructions when operating space heaters.
- ↗ **Use the fireplace sparingly.** Many older natural fireplaces are inefficient and draw more heat out of the house than they produce. Close the flue to eliminate drafts when not in use.
- ↗ **Consider fireplace inserts, doors, or covers.** If you use your fireplace often, consider these products to help reduce the heat loss in your home when using the fireplace. You save money on your heating bills while still being able to enjoy your fireplace.
- ↘ **Control air flow.** If you are building a home, replacing heating equipment, or remodeling, talk to your heating contractor about the options available to ensure proper air flow. Controlling air flow into and out of your home ensures energy efficiency, comfort, and low energy costs.

- ↘ **Purchase Energy Star<sup>®</sup> windows.** When installing new windows, select, at minimum, double-paned (double-glazed) thermal windows. With existing single-paned windows, make sure you use storm windows during the winter months.

## Office

- ↗ **Purchase efficient equipment.** Look for Energy Star<sup>®</sup> office equipment, such as computers, printers, and fax machines. They use less energy than standard office equipment.
- ↗ **Don't let the computer run all day.** Only power on the computer, monitor, printer, and fax machine when you need them. Don't leave them on after you're finished working. Computers and other office equipment still use energy in sleep mode.