



NEWS & INFORMATION

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Take steps to reduce your energy bills and stay safe this summer

Hot weather during the summer in Iowa often results in rising energy demand and use, so Iowans should take appropriate steps to conserve energy and lower their utility bills. Lowering overall energy demand can also lessen constraints and avoid additional operating costs for utility generation and delivery, which benefits everyone.

“Much like we weatherize homes and make smart choices to reduce the impact of cold winter weather, we can take some simple steps that reduce energy use while ensuring safety during the high-cost summer season as well,” said IUB Chairman John Norris.

Homeowners and occupants can ensure maximum comfort and safety while saving energy by:

- Shading the interior from the sun by utilizing shades and drapes, sunscreens over windows, or (long-term) shade trees. It is estimated that during hot and humid Iowa summers, about 50 percent of the heat that accumulates in a home comes from solar heat.
- Using portable fans and/or ceiling fans to increase air circulation. This immediately increases comfort and safety in extremely hot weather. Strategically placed fans can make inside air feel considerably cooler and increase the effectiveness of central and window air conditioners, so you should be able to turn the air conditioner down (or off) when using fans. In some cases, a thermostatically controlled attic fan may help because heat can build to high levels in the attic. Finally, turning the furnace fan to the “on” position rather than the “auto” position provides constant air movement throughout the house. However, it is important to keep furnace registers clean and clear of furniture or other obstructions so air can circulate freely (some may benefit from evaluation and cleaning of their duct system).
- Waiting to use heat-producing appliances like ovens, stoves, dishwashers, and clothes washers and dryers when it is cooler in the late evening or early morning.

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- Making 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. Air conditioners should be situated on the north or west side of the residence for maximum efficiency. Outside air conditioning coils should be kept clean (mild soap and water) and furnace filters changed frequently for better efficiency.
- Using a programmable thermostat, turning up the temperature setting and/or shutting off the air conditioner whenever possible. Pay close attention to weather and temperature forecasts. Iowa typically has occasional breaks from the summer heat, so open windows and take advantage of cooler and less humid outside air whenever possible. Many people are able to utilize cooler parts of the house during breaks from the most extreme heat and avoid additional air conditioning expense. Even during hot weather, you can often lower the temperature setting or turn off the air conditioner when you are away from home.
- Checking on elderly friends and neighbors who do not have air conditioning when the weather becomes extremely hot and humid. Invite them over if you have air conditioning or invite them to spend time with you at the mall, theater, or a favorite restaurant. Remember to give your own air conditioner a break while you are gone. This is easy to do with a programmable thermostat.

Longer-term investments (inquire with your local utility for possible incentive programs) that consistently provide substantial benefits in hot weather (and cold weather too):

- Adding insulation, particularly attic insulation. Excessive heat can move into living spaces from outside, the attic, or a hot garage. Investment in an insulation upgrade often produces significant-enough energy savings (throughout the year) 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.
- Installing more energy efficient windows because windows can be the source of large energy losses. Many windows today are designed and insulated to greatly reduce the air transfer. A wide variety of Low-E windows contain thin, transparent window coatings that permit visible light to pass through them, but help block heat transfer. You should ask a professional what kind of energy efficient windows might be right for your home environment. This can often be done as part of a home energy assessment scheduled through your local utility.

For more ways to stay cool and save money during the hottest days this summer please contact or visit the Web site of your local utility.

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