



NEWS & INFORMATION

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Take steps to reduce your energy bills and stay safe in hot weather

Hot, humid Iowa summers typically result in rising energy demand and use, but Iowans can take steps to conserve energy, lower their utility bills, and stay safe in hot weather. This will help lower overall energy demand, which can benefit everyone by alleviating costly utility supply and delivery constraints.

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

- Shading the interior from direct sunlight by using shades and drapes, sunscreens over windows, or (in the long-term) shade trees. Solar heat accumulates very quickly in Iowa homes during the summer.
- Using portable fans and/or ceiling fans to increase air circulation in areas where people are spending time. This immediately increases comfort and safety in extremely hot weather. Strategically placed fans can increase the effectiveness of central and window air conditioners by making inside air feel considerably cooler, which should enable you to turn the air conditioner down (or off) when using them. However, fans require additional energy; so if the intent is to save energy, consider that even appropriate use of fans will increase energy use if you do not also reduce the air conditioner thermostat setting or the use of a window unit(s). Because fans increase comfort by blowing air across the skin to cool people, use them only where and when people are present.
- 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. This also reduces energy demand at peak times.
- 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 east 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.

(More)

- 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 use 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.

Effective long-term energy efficiency investments

Longer-term investments 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 transfers. Many windows today are designed and insulated to reduce air leakage. Also, a wide variety of Low-E windows contain thin, transparent window coatings that permit visible light to pass through them, but help block associated 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.

Also inquire with your local utility to see if rebates or incentives are offered for specific long-term energy efficiency investments. Contact or visit the Web site of your local utility for more ways to stay cool and save money during the hottest days this summer.

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