

Reduce energy costs while ensuring homes stay cool

When attempting to cool their homes, many homeowners' first instinct may be to adjust

the air conditioning thermostat. But there are other, more energy-efficient methods to cooling

a home.

According to the International Association of Certified Home

Inspectors, as much as half of the energy used in homes goes toward heating and cooling. The following are a handful of ways to make heating and cooling a home more eco-friendly.

Insulate

Insulation often is associated with warmth, and rightfully so, as it is used to protect a home from cold weather. However, insulation also is effective at cooling homes. Many insulation materials work by slowing down the way heat moves through materials and into spaces. Proper insulation can provide effective resistance to the flow of heat, meaning it can help block hot air from flowing into the interior of a home. Insulation will help reduce the amount of work a cooling system will have to do to cool a home thanks to the flow of heat.

Replace air filters

Air filters trap dust, debris and other microscopic particles so they are not circulating in the air or clogging up vents. Over time, air filters can become so bogged down with dirt that air cannot move through a home very easily, forcing cooling systems to work harder. Simply replacing the filters can help cool



ing systems work more efficiently.

Adjust the thermostat

Programmable thermostats allow homeowners to adjust their cooling systems for when they are home and when they are out. Air conditioners can be set at higher temperatures when residents are at work or school, and then lowered before residents arrive home.

Try evaporative coolers

Sometimes called "swamp coolers," these devices can be effective in regions with low humidity. The U.S. Department of Energy notes that these coolers evaporate water into the air to provide a natural and energy-efficient means of cooling a home. When operating an evaporative cooler, windows are opened part way to allow warm indoor air to escape as it is replaced by cooled air. Unlike central air conditioning

systems that recirculate the same air, evaporative coolers provide a steady stream of fresh air into the house. Plus, they consume only about one-quarter of the energy consumed by more traditional air conditioners.

Ceiling fans

Fans help to circulate air throughout a home and create an effective draft. Ceiling fans are usually most effective at circulating air throughout a room. The larger the blades, the more air that can be offset by the fan. Many fans operate quietly and effectively. In some locations, fans may be all that's needed to cool a space. In others, fans may work in conjunction with air conditioners to enable homeowners to raise the thermostat by about 4 F.

Keeping a home cool and saving money in the process is possible by making a few tweaks to the cooling system.



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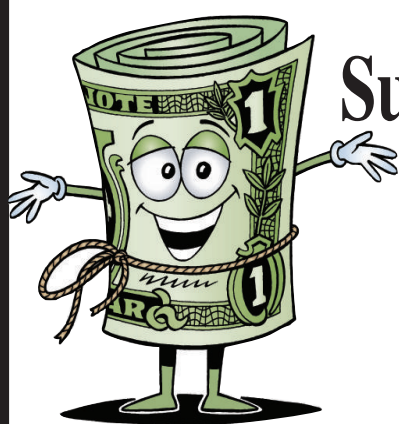
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