

Tips to keep energy costs low as summer approaches

The Laurens Commission of Public Works has handy tips on keeping energy costs low as summer approaches.

Awareness of how energy escapes from your home is critical to better management of your energy bills. The four most common ways energy is wasted are the following:

- Inefficient heating systems
- Infiltration – gaps or cracks in a home that allow warm air to escape.
- Envelope heat loss – heat that is conducted through ceilings, floors, walls, windows and doors to the outside.
- Inefficient hot water systems.

If you are looking for simple steps you can take to save energy, here's a quick check list:

Thermostat/Heating and Cooling System

Set your thermostat to 78 degrees in the summer and 68 degrees in winter; these are the optimum settings for comfort and economy.

Have your heating and air-conditioning system inspected and maintained by a qualified technician at least every other year. Also, clean or replace heating and air-conditioning filters when dirty or at least every other month.

Your heating and cooling system accounts for about half of your annual energy bill. Proper maintenance will prolong its life and allow for more efficient operation.

Water Heating

Next to space heating and cooling, water heating is the biggest user of home energy. A

high-efficiency natural gas water heater can provide plenty of hot water at a much lower operating cost than an electric unit. Note that a big advantage of a natural gas water heater is that most models continue to work during a power outage.

Also, be sure your showerhead is rated no higher than 2.5 gallon per minute. A low-flow shower helps reduce the amount of hot water you use.

Attic/ceilings

If you only insulate one surface, make it the ceiling. Adequate ceiling or attic insulation – made from fiberglass, mineral wool or paper products treated with fire retardant – can cut heat loss by as much as 30 percent. Resistance to heat transfer through these materials is measured in R-value. The greater

the R-value, the greater the effectiveness of the insulation.

Ducts

Wherever heating ducts are exposed to unheated areas, there's a potential for heat loss. A simple insulation wrap can produce big savings. Also, having a knowledgeable contractor pressure test them can identify costly air leaks.

Pipes

Foam insulation around hot and cold water pipes is a low-cost conservation solution and can be very easy to install.

Windows, Doors and Small Openings

Leaks around windows or door frames (as well as where pipes and cables pass through walls, and other small gaps) are common. Silicone caulking and/or weather-stripping can stop costly leaks.

- CROP DUSTER -

(Continued from page 1)

He said crop dusters no longer spray harsh chemicals that they might have sprayed in previous decades, though many people still criticize his work.

"We battle misconceptions on a daily basis, that's for sure," Hall said. "I have so many licences and certifica-

tions I have to maintain, so nothing goes into my tank without me knowing exactly what's in it."

As with all agriculture-related business, crop dusting is very busy in the spring, and the men were signed on for fertilizing timber tracts or at least a two-week trip around the Southeast.

"It will slow down in July

and then pick back up in October," he said, "but right now we're really busy."

In the meantime, he said they enjoy finding local restaurants in the smaller towns, whose airports are more conducive their work.

It was the first time the Agro Flight team had used the Laurens County Airport, and they were enjoying exploring

local barbecue restaurants in Clinton during their days of work, and supporting the local airport.

"We try and patron the local airports as much as we can by buying their fuel and renting a car if they have one," Hall said, adding that they might be back next year.

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