GENERAL HOME TIPS

COOLING

• In summer, keep the sun out by closing draperies, blinds or shades. This helps reduce the energy required to cool your home.
• In summer, a thermostat set at 78 degrees is recommended if the home is occupied. Your kilowatt-hour usage for cooling increases approximately 3% for each degree of temperature setting below 78 degrees. During unoccupied hours, turn off the air conditioner.
• Keep your filter clean. If you use a room air conditioner, check the filter at least once at the beginning of the cooling season. If it is clogged, your unit will operate inefficiently and run longer than necessary. Clean or replace your filters at least twice per season, and continue to monitor at least once a month during the cooling season. Please be aware that a dirty filter may also cause the coil to freeze over due to a lack of air flow and cause the air conditioning to stop working completely.
• When the temperature outside is comfortable, use a window or ceiling fan instead of the air conditioner. A fan only requires a tenth of the energy needed to run an air conditioner. Even if you use an air conditioner, a fan can help circulate the cool air for much more efficient cooling.

HEATING

• In winter, a thermostat set at 68 degrees or lower during the day when the home is occupied is recommended. Your kilowatt-hour usage for heating increases approximately 3% for each degree of temperature setting above 68 degrees. Lower thermostat setting to 55 degrees during sleeping hours.
• Be careful not to block heating registers. Move furniture away from registers to allow heat to flow freely.
• If you have rooms that are not being used, consider closing the heating registers and doors. However, be sure not to close more than one-third of the total heating registers in your home, as it may cause the furnace to cycle more frequently, and may restrict proper air movement in your home.
• Check your seals on doors and windows. If your main door opens to either an unheated hallway or directly to the outdoors, make your door airtight. The loss of warm air is frequently greatest under the bottom edge of your door. A low-cost alternative to a door sweep is a draft guard. This is a closed tube of cloth filled with sand that is laid against the bottom of your door.
• If you have a fireplace without glass doors, consider plugging it when it is not in use. Even a closed damper leaks a large amount of heated air to the outdoors.

APPLIANCES

• Turn off non-essential lights and appliances.
• Avoid running large appliances such as washers, dryers, and electric ovens during peak energy demand hours from 5:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.
• Operate the dishwasher only when fully loaded, avoid rinse and hold cycles. For additional savings, don't use the drying cycle.
• When using the electric range, plan ahead and cook a number of dishes or meals for later use. Open oven doors only when necessary.

MISCELLANEOUS

• Close shades and blinds at night to reduce the amount of heat lost through windows. This also applies during the day for warm climates.
• Avoid unnecessary opening of doors and windows and be sure they are not left open.
• Weatherproof your windows to decrease heat loss in the winter and heat gain in the summer. Check the caulking around the window, and call maintenance if there are leaks. For savings, you may want to invest in a moveable insulation such as insulated curtains.

IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM

CLOTHES WASHER

• Use the correct amount of detergent. Too many bubbles make your machine work harder and use more energy.

• Presoak or use the soak cycle when washing heavily soiled garments like your child's soccer uniform. You'll avoid two washings and save energy.

• Up to 90 percent of the cost of washing clothes comes from heating the water, so use hot water only for very dirty clothes, and always use cold water in the rinse cycle.

CLOTHES DRYER

• Fill your dryer, but do not pack it like luggage bound for Europe.

• A dirty lint screen can cause your dryer to use up to 30 percent more energy-and it can be a fire hazard.

• Clean the lint screen after each load. Lowly lint has little use, and maybe you'll find that missing sock!

• Keep your dryer's outside exhaust clean. A clogged exhaust lengthens drying time and increases energy use.

• If your dryer has an automatic dry cycle, use it rather than a timed cycle.

• Since lightweight items take less drying time, separate loads into heavy and light items. Underwear and rugs do better if kept apart!

• Install a solar clothes dryer (a clothesline)! It will give your clothes a "fresh outdoors" smell.

IN THE KITCHEN

DISHWASHER TIPS

• According to researchers, a load of dishes cleaned in a dishwasher requires 37 percent less water than washing dishes by hand. However, if you fill the wash and rinse basins instead of letting the water run, you'll use half as much water as a dishwasher would.

• 80 percent of the energy your dishwasher uses is for heating water. Remember-by saving water, you're also helping your city's wastewater facility save on the energy used to pump it, treat it, and clean it. Up to 50 percent of a typical city's energy bill goes to supplying water and cleaning it after use!

• Avoid using the "rinse hold" setting on your dishwasher. This feature uses 3 to 7 more gallons of hot water for each use. Never use "rinse hold" for just a few dirty dishes. Instead consider the old-fashioned hand wash/rinse basin option.

• Use short wash cycles for everything but the dirtiest dishes. They use less energy and work just as well.

• If your dishwasher has an air-dry setting, choose it instead of heat-drying. You'll cut your dishwasher's energy use 15 to 50 percent. If there's no air-dry setting, turn the dishwasher off after its final rinse and open the door. The dishes will dry slowly, but without using any extra electricity!

• Many newer dishwashers do not require you to rinse dishes off before loading. If you prefer to pre-rinse use cold water on your dishes before loading them-but don't waste water by letting it run continuously.

• If you have a choice, install your dishwasher away from your refrigerator. The dishwasher's heat and moisture increase your refrigerator's energy consumption. If you have to put them next to each other, place a sheet of foam insulation between them.

COOKING TIPS

• Microwave ovens use around 50 percent less energy than conventional ovens; they're most efficient for small portions or defrosting. For large meals, stovetop cooking is usually more efficient.

• Use your microwave as often as possible in the summer. You'll be more comfortable and save on air conditioning costs.

• Use toaster ovens or microwave ovens to cook small- to medium-sized meals.

• With conventional ovens, minimize the preheating time. Unless you're baking breads or pastries, you may not even need to preheat.

• Don't open the oven door too often when checking your food, especially if it's your prize recipe for a baking contest. Each time you open the door the oven temperature drops by 25°. Watch the clock or use a timer instead.

• Turn off electric burners several minutes before the allotted cooking time. The heating element will stay hot long enough to finish cooking those eggs or favorite side dish without using more electricity. The same principle works with your oven cooking.

• Cook with the oven door closed. A partially open door wastes energy, costs you money, and warms you instead of the food.

• Stagger pans and baking sheets on upper and lower racks to improve airflow, and don't cover racks with foil. Food cooks more quickly and efficiently when heat circulates freely.

• Use glass or ceramic pans in ovens. You can turn down the temperature about 25° and foods will cook just as quickly.

• Match the size of the pan to the heating element; more heat will get to the pan and less will be lost to the surrounding air or found by the pan handle! A 6-inch pan on an 8-inch burner will waste over 40 percent of the energy.

• On electric stovetops, use flat-bottomed pans that make full contact with the element. A warped or rounded pan may be a conversation piece, but will waste most of the heat.

REFRIGERATORS AND FREEZERS

• Leave enough space between your refrigerator and the walls or cabinets so air can circulate around the condenser coils. Trapped heat increases energy consumption.

• For food safety keep your refrigerator between 36° and 40° F and your freezer between 0° and 5° F. A refrigerator that is colder than safety dictates uses up to 25 percent more energy, and will freeze your milk and lettuce.

• As your food budget permits, keep your freezer and refrigerator full-but not so full that air can't circulate. The mass of cold items inside will help your refrigerator recover each time the door is opened. Here's a hint: If your refrigerator is nearly empty, store water-filled containers inside.

• Check door seals regularly to make sure they're airtight. To test them, close the door on a dollar bill and try to pull it out. (Larger bills are harder to come by, but work just as well!) If the dollar slides out easily, you're wasting energy and money.

• Unless it has untold sentimental value, get rid of that older, energy-hogging second refrigerator in your garage! It's costing you about $120 a year to operate. One large refrigerator is cheaper to run than two smaller ones. (Warning: If you get rid of an older refrigerator or freezer, please dispose of it properly, and make sure the door is removed so children cannot be trapped inside.)

• Side-by-side refrigerators use approximately 7 percent to 13 percent more energy than similar-sized models with the freezer on top.

• Chest freezers are typically more efficient than upright freezers, because they're better insulated and cold air doesn't spill out when the door is opened.

• Brush or vacuum dirty refrigerator or freezer coils. You'll improve your appliance's efficiency by as much as 30 percent

CONSERVING GAS

- When cooking on a gas burner, use moderate flame settings to conserve natural gas.

- Remember that a blue flame means your gas stove is operating efficiently. A yellowish flame is sick and needs an adjustment.

- Set back your thermostat by 5 or 10 degrees when sleeping or when your house is empty four hours or longer.

- Set the thermostat control setting for your furnace no higher than 68 degrees Fahrheit during the heating season.

- Set your water heater temperature to 120 degrees Fahrenheit or to the "warm" setting.

- Set your water heater temperature control to the pilot position when your home is vacant for two days or longer.