



# 11 Ways to Reduce Your Summer Utility Bills



## 1 Cut down on energy leaks

- ❖ Shut off the light behind you.
- ❖ Unplug electronics that aren't being used.  
(i.e., cell phone chargers, small appliances like toasters, or power strips that provide power for many appliances)

Note: Big-screen TVs, DVD players, digital photo frames, and other appliances use more energy than you realize. Unplugging an appliance is best because certain appliances use energy even if they are turned off. Consult with roommates or coworkers before unplugging a shared appliance.

## 2 Close blinds, storm windows, or shades during the day

- ❖ The sun can heat up a room very quickly.
- ❖ Keeping the sun from shining into windows will cut down on cooling costs.

Note: Many stores sell thermal insulated curtains designed for this purpose to insulate against the heat.

## 3 Use air conditioning efficiently

- ❖ Set the thermostat to 78 degrees, and don't lower it.
- ❖ Turn the air conditioning off at night and in the early morning.
- ❖ Invest in an energy efficient air conditioner, these are 10-15% more efficient.

Note: The smaller the difference between the outdoor and indoor temperatures, the smaller your bill. Do not place appliances that give off heat, such as lamps or TVs, near an air conditioner's thermostat.

## 4 Use fans instead of air conditioning

- ❖ Circulation is important to using less air conditioning during the summer.
- ❖ Cool down the house early in the morning by placing a box fan in the window and opening up another window at the opposite end of the house, in addition to turning on ceiling fans. Box fans help cool air come inside.

Note: Most central air conditioners will also have internal fans to help circulate the air in your house while reducing your need to use the air conditioner. Turn the fan on "auto." Using fans at night will help a natural breeze cool down your house. This will work if the temperature drops at night. Turn a fan directly towards yourself or guests.





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## Avoid heat build-up in your home

- ❖ Use electronics in the early morning or late night (i.e., washer, dryer, air conditioning, computers)
- ❖ On hot days, avoid using the oven; cook on the stove, use a microwave or grill outside.
- ❖ Wash only full loads of dishes and/or clothes. Consider air drying both dishes and/or clothing.
- ❖ Take short showers instead of baths.

Note: Minimize activities that generate a lot of heat, such as running a computer, burning open flames running dishwasher, using hot device such as curling irons or hair dryers. Wait until after 6 p.m. to cook, do laundry, or wash dishes on days the temperature is over 90 degrees.

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## Ask about utility discounts or budget billing

- ❖ Receive help with your bill year-round if you are in a low-income household, on disability, or have a limited income for other reasons.
- ❖ A representative of your electricity company will tell you what discounts are available.
- ❖ Utilize budget billing to help avoid seasonal peaks in your electric bills by dividing your payments evenly over the course of the entire year.

Note: Budget billing makes it easier to budget and pay your energy bill each month, because you'll know your regular payment amount.

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## Participate in a voluntary direct load control program

- ❖ The Direct Load Control Program involves getting bill credits in exchange for allowing the Pepco to install a control switch on your air conditioner, heater, or other utility.

Note: The electricity company will turn the utility off during peak hours.

Often, the utility is not shut off for long periods of time

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## Use energy efficient light bulbs

- Compact fluorescent (CFL) and light emitting diode (LEDs) bulbs are more efficient than traditional incandescent bulbs because they use less energy.
- Most stores have these bulbs available for purchase.

Note: Check lamps and other lights to see if you are using any incandescent bulbs.

Replace all the incandescent bulbs in your house or office. CFL bulbs need to be recycled once they burn out.



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## 9 Use energy efficient appliances

- ❖ Microwaves, pressure cookers, or outdoor grills use less electricity than stoves and ovens.
- ❖ You can also use a clothes-line instead of a dryer.
- ❖ When purchasing new products, look for energy efficient options.

## 10 Check for proper insulation

- ❖ Insulation cuts down on cooling costs because it helps keep cool air inside during the summer.
- ❖ Insulation requirements have changed over the years,
- ❖ your home or place of work may not have enough insulation.
- ❖ Some types of insulation can be **installed by you**, and others need professional installation
  - ✓ Check for insulation in attics or crawl spaces, making note of areas where there is weathering or gaps in the insulation.
  - ✓ Consult a professional to check your wall insulation because it requires probing an electrical socket
  - ✓ Batt insulation is flexible blanket-like products that fit into spaces of the wall. This type of insulation can be installed by homeowners.
  - ✓ Foam or fiber insulation will need to be installed by a professional.



## 11 Plant Shady trees on the west and south sides of your house

- ❖ This is a more permanent solution to cutting down summer energy costs, and it is only possible if you are a homeowner or if you get permission from your landlord. The shady trees will cut down on cooling costs for your home.

