

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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TOP FIVE WAYS TO SAVE ENERGY IN THE HOME

SECO Experts Say They Will Lower Power Costs

Sumterville, FL – The energy experts at Sumter Electric Cooperative (SECO) have listed the top five ways people can cut down on energy waste and reduce their electric bills. Based on years of doing home energy audits and research, the following tips are offered that will have a dramatic effect in anyone's home:

1. THERMOSTAT SETTINGS

- Thermostat settings, higher in the winter and lower in the summer, are the primary cause of higher electric bills in Florida. The Florida Solar Energy Center has stated that for each degree below 78 degrees F in the summer and above 68 degrees F in the winter, the energy usage is increased by 10 to 12 percent.
- Set the thermostat and leave it. Heat pumps, in particular, will use more energy if the thermostat is raised in increments of more than 3 degrees at a time in the winter because it will activate the back-up heat strips to bring up the temperature quickly.
- Installation of digital programmable thermostats to regulate the temperature will greatly reduce the amount of energy used in the home.
- Thermostat settings should be 78 to 80 degrees F for the A/C in summer and 65 to 68 degrees F for the heat in winter.

2. HVAC SYSTEM

- The best heating system for Florida is a high-efficiency heat pump. The heat pump will save 65 to 70 percent for heating energy use over electric strip heating systems.
- Heat pumps need to be serviced EVERY YEAR to maintain efficiency. Faulty relays in these systems can bring on both the heat pump and the back-up strip heaters constantly in winter and summer resulting in very high energy use.
- Replacement of older electric strip heating systems with high-efficiency heat pumps will greatly reduce the winter usage. Contact HVAC contractors at the first sign of greatly increased usage.

3. DUCT LEAKS

- Leaks in the ductwork are amongst the largest energy wasters in most Florida homes, both site built and mobile homes, and leaks are prevalent in most homes over 10 years old.
- Leaks in the return ductwork will pressurize the home and raise the supply temperature as well as introduce higher humidity into the system, cutting the Energy Efficiency Rating by as much as 50 percent.

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- Supply system leaks will send conditioned air outside and depressurize the home through the infiltration routes.
- These pressure differences increase both positive or negative air changes in homes and will extend the HVAC running time, causing an average 22 percent increase in energy usage.
- New methods of sealing the duct connections with masking material are not expensive and will greatly reduce leakage and higher energy use.

4. INTERIOR DOOR CLOSURE

- Most homes in Florida are ranch style, single story, and average 1500 to 2500 square feet of climate controlled space. Most homes built prior to 1995 have only one air return duct, usually in the main part of the home.
- If internal room doors are closed during HVAC operation, those rooms will be pressurized from the fan force and the main part of the home will be depressurized, creating an imbalance in the system and resulting in longer running time due to air changes (conditioned air forced outside in the pressurized rooms and outside air drawn inside to the depressurized area). This imbalance results in extended HVAC running time and higher energy use. Closing all interior doors can increase the energy usage to condition the home by 35 to 45 percent.
- Opening all interior doors when the HVAC is in use preserves the HVAC balance.

5. INFILTRATION

- The older a home gets the more the caulking and weatherstripping need attention and maintenance. Especially in older homes, infiltration areas around doors, windows, and electrical outlets can work in conjunction with pressure changes inside the home to extend HVAC running time and increase energy usage in the home.
- Inspect and maintain caulking and weatherstripping at least yearly.

Want more energy-saving advice? Visit www.secoenergy.com for a host of additional tips, on-line energy audits, and more. SECO serves 170,000 accounts in Lake, Marion, Sumter, Citrus, Pasco, Levy, and Hernando counties.

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