

SECO News

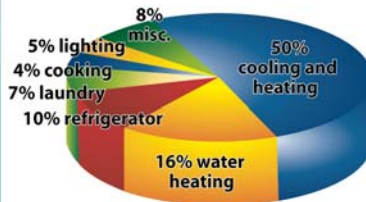
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

Energy Saving Guidelines for You and Your Family

Members ask, "What can I do to help keep my power bill down?"

You have the power to control how much electricity you use. And, as the cost of energy goes up, more people like you are concerned with the amount of energy being consumed in the home. This is one reason why SECO has placed a high priority on energy efficiency. Education, home energy audits, weatherization services and techniques, online energy audits and the EFI energy store are just a few ways your co-op is helping equip you with the right tools to keep your energy costs down.

Let's face it – we are creatures of comfort, and space conditioning plays an important role in that. As you can see in the illustration below, cooling and heating are the biggest factors in energy usage in most Florida homes. Here are answers to a few of the questions SECO is asked by the members that will help you save money on your electric bill.



What temperature should I set my thermostat?

This can be one of the easiest ways to reduce your energy usage. Cooling your home below

78°F in the summer or heating your home higher than 68°F in the winter drives the cost up. For each degree cooler you set the thermostat when cooling your home during the summer, you add 10%-12% to the cost.

Should I run my ceiling fans all the time?

Ceiling fans cool people, not rooms. To save money, only run the fans when people are in the room.

How much does it cost to run my ceiling fan?

It's about the same as running a 100-watt light bulb. If you run it 24/7, that's about 72 kWh's per month or roughly \$8.00 a month per fan.

How much insulation should I have in my attic?

SECO recommends an R-30 value for attic insulation. Also consider checking for air leaks in your duct system, making sure all joints have a tight fit. Black marks on the duct insulation are signs of air leakage.

How can I improve the efficiency of my central AC system?

To maintain optimal efficiency for your air conditioning system, it's a good idea to have a general maintenance check up by a qualified service representative on the unit annually and change or clean the air filters monthly.

Is it hard on my heat pump to change the thermostat setting when I am going to be away?

If you plan to be away longer than four hours, experts recommend adjusting the temperature by 4°F. Programmable thermostats, available at SECO's online energy store or at many local stores for less than \$100, will save you the time and trouble of having to remember to do this yourself.

continued inside . . .

Fay, Fay Go Away, Don't Come Back Another Day.

Synopsis Inside...

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SECO's Board of Trustees will meet Monday, September 29 at 2:00 p.m. in the Corporate Offices located at 330 South US Highway 301 in Sumterville. A Trustees' meeting will also be held on October 27, 2008.

Energy Savings Concluded.

Will upgrading my heat pump save me money?

Upgrading your unit to a more efficient model could save you money; however, there are several variables to consider when calculating the savings. Studies indicate the average age of an operational heat pump is 15 to 20 years.

If you are in the market to purchase a new model, some of the factors to consider are: square footage of your home, window orientation and exposure to light, construction materials, levels of insulation, air infiltration and lifestyle. It is necessary that you consider the SEER (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Rating) when purchasing your new heat pump. This is a measure of BTUs divided by the seasonal energy input in watt-hours. Basically, the higher the SEER number, the greater the energy savings; however, the initial cost of the unit goes up as well. (The chart below will help you understand cost efficiency factors related to the SEER.)

Depending on your purchase, your cooling expert should be able to calculate the annual energy savings in your home. It's wise to get a minimum of three bids from various qualified heating/cooling professionals. Ask questions, read your contract carefully and never pay the contractor in full before the work starts.

Annual Cooling Energy Cost

SEER (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio)

BTUs	6	6.6	7.4	7.8	8.5	8.9	10*	11	12	13	15
12,000	\$288	\$262	\$234	\$222	\$203	\$194	\$173	\$157	\$144	\$133	\$115
18,000	\$432	\$393	\$350	\$332	\$305	\$291	\$259	\$236	\$216	\$199	\$173
24,000	\$576	\$524	\$467	\$443	\$407	\$388	\$346	\$314	\$288	\$266	\$230
30,000	\$720	\$655	\$584	\$554	\$508	\$485	\$432	\$393	\$360	\$332	\$288
36,000	\$864	\$785	\$701	\$665	\$610	\$582	\$518	\$471	\$432	\$399	\$346
42,000	\$1008	\$916	\$817	\$775	\$712	\$680	\$605	\$550	\$504	\$465	\$403
48,000	\$1152	\$1047	\$934	\$886	\$813	\$777	\$691	\$628	\$576	\$532	\$461

*Minimum efficiency standards. Average cost savings listed above is based on a number of averaging variables (family size, lifestyle, appliance efficiency and usage, etc.), which may vary from household to household.

What else can I do?

There are many other ways to save on your electric bill. Energy conservation tips and resources are available from SECO to help you save money. Pick up one of our free *Home Energy Management* booklets at any office, or on the Web, look for more ways to save under the Energy Information category at www.secoenergy.com. Here you can conduct an energy audit by answering a few questions to complete a personal energy profile about your home's energy usage. There are two versions to choose from – a **Full Audit** or an **EZ-Audit**. Choosing the full audit takes a little more time but will give you the most accurate results.

Also, available by appointment only, SECO provides members a free **Home Energy Audit**, which involves a walk-through at your home by one of our energy specialists who can answer questions discussing the most efficient way to run your HVAC system and help you troubleshoot problems. SECO energy specialists may use infrared scanning to detect energy losses that cannot be seen by the naked eye. ☺

Fay The Storm That Wouldn't Go Away

Tropical Storm Fay paid us a call in August and brought some much needed rain. However, like one of those relatives that one soon wearies of, Fay came, overstayed her welcome and didn't want to leave.

"Fay was one of the most unpredictable storms we've dealt with in many years," said Barry Bowman, Director of Corporate Communications and Energy Services. SECO made all the preparations for dealing with a major hurricane well before Fay made her first landfall in the Florida Keys on Monday, the 18th of August. At the end of the week we were still monitoring Tropical Storm Fay as she continued to dump a deluge of rain, severely flooding our neighbors along the east coast of Florida. Fay crept up the eastern coast at three miles an hour, stalled for hours, and crossed the state multiple times. During this storm residents dealt with some of the worst flooding ever. Trees and power lines fell due to wind and saturated ground conditions causing outages that kept both our crews and contract crews busy with repairs.

Bowman concluded, "Fay was a good test of our emergency plan and we also hope it raised the collective consciousness of all Floridians that these weather events can be quite serious and they need to be prepared to deal with them. Storms don't have to reach hurricane status to be dangerous.

A new feature SECO recently added is Storm Alerts by email. To receive these alerts sign up for SECO's eNewsletter service at www.secoenergy.com. Outage information can also be seen at www.secostormcenter.com. ☺



tips & quips
about our
environment
and its
inhabitants

NATURE'S
reflections

ECO-FRIENDLY YARDS

Going green starts at home

A Florida-friendly garden conserves water, protects the environment, makes room for wildlife and requires low maintenance. This common sense approach to landscaping emphasizes these basic principles:

Planning – A well designed landscape utilizing patios, decks, shrub beds and ground covers significantly reduces maintenance and water consumption.

Use more native plants – Naturally adapted to Florida, native plants require less water, less maintenance and attract more wildlife to enjoy.

Make room for wildlife – Providing food, water and shelter for nesting will help attract more wildlife particularly butterflies, birds and hummingbirds.

Right tree in the right place – Well placed shade trees provide a barrier from the hot afternoon sun to help reduce cooling costs. Deciduous trees (*lose their leaves in winter*) provide shade during summer, then allow warm sunlight through during cold months. Evergreen trees provide windbreaks to shelter your yard.

Efficient watering – Over watering wastes water and produces weak plants that are more susceptible to disease. Consider drip irrigation systems for minimal waste. Add a rain barrel to catch rainwater. Your plants will love it and you'll save money on your water bill.

Compost – Recycle grass clippings, leaves, organic kitchen waste, like fruit and vegetable peels, coffee grounds or egg shells to provide added nutrients to the soil and reduce waste disposal.

Mulch – Maintaining a 4-inch layer of mulch around plants helps retain soil moisture and suppress weeds. The exception is citrus which do not perform well with mulch and should be kept clean underneath.

Solar-powered lighting – A few solar powered landscaping lights add a pleasing ambience to your yard and can help to reduce your overall energy use.

Appropriate maintenance – During the dry season, set mower blades a little higher to lessen the stress on lawns. Fertilize appropriately, less is often best. Try using organic pesticides and fertilizers. Every little bit helps.

Learning to see your home landscape as a small part of a larger natural ecosystem helps in creating a Florida-friendly yard and a healthier environment for all. ☺

– Photo and column by Sandi Staton – sandi.staton@secoenergy.com

Beware of Counterfeit Electrical Products

A "fake" purse or watch may make you angry, but they don't carry the risk of injury or death. On the other hand, counterfeit electrical products can be dangerous. Counterfeit circuit breakers, power strips, extension cords, batteries and holiday lights can cause fires, explosions, shocks and electrocutions.

In recent years, the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has recalled more than 1 million counterfeit electrical products, including circuit breakers that did not trip when overloaded, cell phone batteries without a safety device in the circuitry to prevent overcharging, and extension cords with mislabeled, undersized wiring that overheated.

Counterfeits can be extremely difficult to spot. They could be a knock-off of a name brand product or bear an unauthorized certification marking.

Here are some tips to protect yourself from the dangers of counterfeit electrical products:

- **Scrutinize the product, packaging and labeling.** Look for certification marks from the manufacturer and an independent testing laboratory – such as Underwriters Laboratories (UL) or the Canadian Standards Association (CSA). Trademarked logos that look different than usual may signal a counterfeit.
- **If the price is "too good to be true,"** it could be because the product is inferior and unsafe.
- **Be careful when buying from an unknown source,** such as a street vendor. Use established stores that purchase their goods from legitimate distributors and genuine manufacturers.
- **Check the warning label.** It should be free of grammatical errors and not conflict with information elsewhere on the package.
- **Avoid no-name products.**
- **Look for the name and contact information** of the manufacturer. If you find the information missing, consider purchasing electrical products elsewhere.
- **Sign up for CPSC email alerts at www.cpsc.gov** to stay informed about product recalls.

Sources: Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC); Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI)



Here's your chance to express yourself:

webmaster@secoenergy.com

SECO Energy
Corporate Communications
PO Box 301, Sumterville, FL
33585-0301

... and help us serve you better.

I lived in New England for 60-plus years (MA) and can count on my hands the number of times I got an update on where my money went for power. I think you do a great job letting people know how and where their money is being used. I love the *SECO News*.

THANK YOU,

Harry Jacobson

The Villages, Florida

Dear Mr. Duncan,

Thank you for this opportunity to "Fight the Fight" with you and all the fine people at SECO!

May God, in His mercy "Grant us a way where there is no way"! I have come to believe you are one of His soldiers doing battle on this front and perhaps, on many others.

Again, many thanks and God Bless you and yours in all you're doing!!!

Anne Maguire

Leesburg, Florida



Dear Mr. Duncan,

I have sent copies of the attached article [personal article in reference to July's "Rising Cost of Fuel"] to Charlie Crist, Senator McCain and Lou Dobbs. I believe that this same strategy will work for the coal fired plants and the nuclear energy field as well as wind and natural gas industries. I applaud the overturning of the ban on coal fired plants and

I was stunned at our Governor's apparent ignorance of this valuable resource. I am also in favor of the two new nuclear power generating plants to be built in Levy County, Florida.

We appreciate all that you do for us here in Citrus County. Your efforts to clear the overhead power lines this past winter was very successful. We have not had a power outage since that operation was completed.

Your newsletters are always welcome and most informative.

Keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Charles Fisher

Floral City, Florida



I am so thankful for SECO Electric as they strive to keep our bills down.

A. Williams

Lady Lake, Florida

storm news

Responses to Fay Storm Alerts:

We lost SECO power last night at about 8 PM and it was on in about an hour - the winds and rain were terrible but you folks came through - very happy to be a SECO member!

Melanie & Roy French

Good and timely assurance for customers . . . thanks very much!

Roger Patterson

Thank you for this reassuring letter! We appreciate all you do to keep our household up and running.

Linda & Hugh Streisel

This is really neat! I didn't know SECO did this. Thanks for the emails!

Susan League

Get the Most Current News Electronically!

Instant newsletters, announcements and storm alerts sent directly to the inbox of your computer. Sign up here and return this coupon with your electric payment or sign up at secoenergy.com.

Name _____

Email Address _____

- Yes, I would like to receive **SECO's Storm Alerts** only.
- Yes, please sign me up for both **SECO's eNews** service and **Storm Alerts**.

SECO's Control Center

is staffed 24-hours a day, 365 days a year to provide you with the excellent service you expect and a quick response to your emergency service calls.

Sumter County... (352) 793-3801

Citrus County..... (352) 726-3944

Lake County (352) 357-5600

..... (352) 429-2195

Levy County..... (352) 528-3644

Marion County (352) 237-4107

..... (352) 489-4390

Hernando County (352) 521-5788

Pasco County (352) 521-5788

SECO's emergency hot-line

is automated and designed for high volume calling.

Outage Hotline (800) SECO-141

..... **(800) 732-6141**

In the event of a major storm, you can report an outage or check on restoration progress at **www.secostormcenter.com**.