

Make Spring more energy efficient

Five ways to help cut your power bill

Spring marks a perfect time of year to make your home more energy efficient. Here are five quick tips that will save both energy and money:


1 Seal cracks and gaps around your home. As you prepare your home for Spring, consider adding weather stripping around leaky doors and caulking around window frames. *TogetherWeSave.com*, a website sponsored by Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives, the branding program of the nation's not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric co-ops, shows how easy it is to use a caulking gun to seal up leaks around vents, ductwork, and windows. A typical homeowner can save more than \$200 annually by taking this simple step.

2 Change filters regularly. Change furnace and air conditioner filters monthly. Dirty filters restrict air flow and reduce the overall efficiency of your heating and cooling system by making it work harder.

3 Clean the refrigerator inside and out. Now's a good time to not only throw out that leftover fruitcake from the holidays but check the temperature settings on your refrigerator. Ideally, a refrigerator's temperature should be between 37 and 40 degrees for maximum operating efficiency. If it's time to replace that old refrigerator, be sure to buy one that's ENERGY STAR® rated. These energy-efficient appliances can save as much as \$100 a year based on calculations from *TogetherWeSave.com*.

4 Think sun block. By pulling down the shades on your windows this spring and summer, you could save about \$35 a year. Your local retail store likely carries lots of inexpensive window coverings. Best of all, by blocking the sun, your house will stay cool and comfortable year-round.

5 Enjoy spring breezes. Use a clothesline during warm months and let sunlight and breezes dry clothes naturally. Not running the dryer will reduce your electric bill and add a genuine clean scent to your family's laundry.

You can learn more about ways to lower your monthly energy bill by visiting secoenergy.com or by calling the energy professionals at your Co-op. 

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SECO's Board of Trustees will meet on Monday, February 28 at 2:30 PM in the Corporate Offices located 330 South US Highway 301 in Sumterville.

A Trustees' meeting will also be held on March 28, 2011.

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Read your *SECO News* closely this month. If you spot your SECO account number "hidden" within these pages, you will win a \$25 gift card. The hidden account number must be your own.

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Member account numbers will be selected at random by computer to be included in each edition of *SECO News*. If yours shows up, you will win a \$25 gift card to one of a variety of area restaurants or retail outlets. You have 45 days to claim your prize. There will be more than one account number in each edition of the *SECO News*.

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In addition, as a subscriber you also get to see the very same storm news releases we send out to the media when tropical storms or hurricanes are headed our way except you get them first. This is helpful information on storm preparations and projected impacts, as well as power restoration progress. It's news you can use.

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To sign up for the *SECO eNews* go to our website at www.secoenergy.com and look for the *Quick Links* section (located on the lefthand side of the page below the logo), where you will find a link to sign up for the electronic newsletter. 🌿

**Plan to attend your
Annual Meeting!**
Saturday, March 26, 2011

Compact Fluorescents (CFLs) save energy on lighting

Compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFL) are significantly more energy efficient than incandescent light bulbs because they require less energy to provide the same amount of light. Another bonus – they last up to 10 times longer than incandescent light bulbs.

If every home in America replaced just one incandescent light bulb with an ENERGY STAR® qualified CFL, in one year it would save enough energy to light three million homes.

tips & quips
about our
environment
and its
inhabitants

NATURE'S reflections

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CLOUDLESS SULPHURS

One of Florida's many winged wonders

Cloudless Sulphur (*Phoebis sennae*) is a medium-sized yellow butterfly with a wingspan of two to three inches and a fast, powerful flight. Males are virtually solid yellow above and below and have few visible markings. Females may be yellow, greenish-white, yellow-orange, or white with a black margin on the upper side of its wings. While a common year-round resident in much of Florida, some migrate northward each spring to establish breeding colonies in Canada and the Midwest. When cooler autumn weather approaches, adults from the final generation begin a return migration, coming back south to overwinter.

Adult Cloudless Sulphurs feed by sipping nectar from flowers. Although it seems to show a preference for red blossoms such as those of the bottlebrush, hibiscus, and Turk's cap, other nectar sources include bougainvillea, azalea, Mexican sage, shrimp plant, and golden dewdrop.

Whitish elongated eggs are deposited singly on the leaves of host plants. After six days a long, slender green or yellow caterpillar with a narrow yellow stripe down each side and covered with small black bumps known as tubercles emerges. Larvae feed on cassia, favoring sicklepod and partridge pea. The adult life cycle is approximately one month to a year.

Of more than 765 species of butterflies found in North America, Florida has over 160 breeding species, including forty that are unique to the state with another 200 species that have been recorded passing through. Florida has the highest number of butterflies of any state east of the Mississippi River which makes this a premier location for butterfly gardeners.

Most adult butterflies rely on flower nectar for food. Some are attracted to a variety of brightly colored blossoms, while others have distinct color preferences and feeding behaviors. As a rule, small butterflies nectar from small flowers and large butterflies nectar from larger ones. A wide mix of flower colors, shapes, and sizes provides appealing and accessible food to a greater number of butterfly species. It also makes your garden more eye-catching. Larval (caterpillar) host plants are also a key ingredient to any well-designed butterfly garden. While nectar plants invite butterflies into your garden, host plants offer them a reason to stay and reproduce. 🌿

Column & photo by Sandi Staton – sandi.staton@secoenergy.com