

air conditioning

The Facts :

Air conditioning equipment is the largest consumer of electricity in homes and can contribute as much as 50% to 70% of your total electricity bill depending on hours of usage, maintenance and operating efficiency. Therefore, it is important for customers to pay close attention to the type of air conditioning equipment installed in their homes.

Tips :

- Q :** *What is the most efficient thermostat setting for air conditioning?*
- A :** The best setting is the highest temperature at which you feel comfortable. The cost of operating your air conditioner increases significantly with each degree the thermostat is lowered. Normally, comfortable settings may be achieved between 77°F and 80°F.
- Q :** *I have one room in my home that is always too hot in the summer, what can I do to make that room more comfortable?*
- A :** If the room has a large area of exposed glass, keep curtains or blinds closed during daylight hours, particularly at times when the sun would shine directly in. You might also ask your air conditioning technician to check whether you are getting air in that room - there may be a problem with your duct system.
- Q :** *How many times a year should I have my units serviced?*
- A :** It is recommended that units should be checked and serviced every quarter by a qualified technician. During this service, the filters should be replaced or properly washed (if washable filters are used) and the vents cleaned. If need be, you can also vacuum or wash the filters and vents yourself once every month to ensure they are clean, or replace the filters if necessary.

Q : *Will ceiling fans help cool my home and should I run them constantly, even when my air conditioning is running?*

A : Ceiling fans can help make the home more comfortable, either alone or in combination with your air conditioner, by creating more air movement, which makes the air feel cooler. But remember that fans do not actually cool the air, so there is no point in running them in unoccupied rooms or when no one is at home. Also, when the ceiling fan is on, set the thermostat to the highest temperature at which you feel comfortable.

Q : *When I replace my central air conditioner, what should I look for?*

A : There are a number of criteria to consider. A very important one is the efficiency of the unit. Look for one with a Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) rating of 13 or higher. The higher the number, the more efficient the unit. Since January 2006, companies in the U.S. ceased manufacturing or selling units with a SEER rating of 10, and by the end of 2006, units with a SEER rating of 12 were no longer produced because of their higher energy consumption and operating costs. The purchase of 13 SEER and higher units may be more, but the energy costs will be much lower.

Q : *What are the advantages of installing a programmable thermostat?*

A : You can save as much as 10% a year on your cooling bills by simply turning your thermostat back 10% to 15% for eight hours. Using a programmable thermostat, you can adjust the times you turn on the air conditioning according to a pre-set schedule. As a result, the equipment doesn't operate as much as when you are asleep or when the house or part of the house is not occupied. Programmable

thermostats can store and repeat multiple daily settings that you can manually override without affecting the rest of the daily or weekly programmes.

Q : *Are there any other tips on air conditioning and cooling?*

A : Don't place lamps or TV sets near your wall-mounted air conditioning thermostat. The thermostat senses heat rising from these appliances, which can cause the air conditioner to run longer than necessary.

Plant trees or bushes to shade air conditioning units but not to block the airflow. Units operating in the shade use as much as 10% less electricity than the same ones operating in the sun.

Try to minimise the use of a dehumidifier at the same time your air conditioner is operating. The dehumidifier will increase the cooling load and force the air conditioner to work harder.

Close draperies and shades on windows during the day to keep heat from the sun out of your house. In the evening, opening drapes and shades lets heat escape through the windows.

If building or renovating, choose light-coloured roof shingles for your home to reflect more of the sun's heat. The darker the shingles, the more heat that will be absorbed.

