

## This information brought to you by

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## Energy Savings—Getting The Most For Your Money

After the Southern California power crisis of 2000-2001, as well as the current price of gas, don't you wish there was something you could do to decrease your utility bills? There is, and many of them don't take much time, effort, or money.

- Replace incandescent light bulbs with fluorescent bulbs. Fluorescent bulbs cost more initially but last a lot longer.
- Make sure your doors and windows fit tightly and have weather stripping, including the door to the garage.
- Fix faucet leaks, especially hot water leaks, and if the leak is streaming instead of dripping.
- Lower the thermostats on your water heater and on your heating and cooling system—For every degree you lower it, you can decrease your heating bill by about 2%. Don't lower your water heater below the manufacturer's recommended setting, though, typically marked on the thermostat.
- Have a home energy audit done every couple of years. Many utility companies do these free. With the audit in hand, you'll know exactly what you can do to save money on your utility bills.
- Check your air filter monthly and clean or replace it if it is dirty. Dirty filters cause your heating and cooling system to work overtime, thereby wasting energy.
- Install landscaping that does more than just look good. The right mix of trees and shrubs can lower your utility bills by blocking winter winds or summer sun. Check with your local nursery for guidance on selecting appropriate vegetation.
- If you're buying a new appliance, look for the "Energy Star," which indicates that the appliance meets standards set by the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency.
- Proper roofing material and adequate insulation (don't forget the attic) are essential to saving money. While building codes typically dictate the minimum amount of insulation, a home owner replacing a roof may choose a roof based on looks rather than energy efficiency. A study by Florida Power & Light proves what Southerners have known for generations: light-colored roofs do the best job of reflecting the sun. The study showed that the best type of roofing material for Sunbelt homes is white, galvanized metal. It actually came in a very close second to cement tile roofing in its ability to reflect the sun's heat, but won overall because of its "superior ability to cool quickly at night."

Whether the energy-saving changes you're prepared to make are big-ticket items (such as a roof, central heating and cooling, or an appliance), or inexpensive items such as changing light bulbs or getting a room heating or cooling system, be sure to check with your utility company for rebates. You might be surprised to see how rewarding energy efficiency can be in terms of savings and in terms of rebates from your utility company.