

Chill Out: Tips for Air-Conditioning Safely and Efficiently

Since air conditioners run much more in the summer months, there is also a potential cost to safety if an air conditioner malfunctions. The Energy Education Council knows that energy safety and efficiency often go hand-in-hand, and offer the following tips to help keep your home safe and your cooling bills lower.

- ▶ Common problems leading to air conditioner malfunction often include faulty installation and inadequate maintenance. For this reason, always check to be sure that your equipment is being used in compliance with manufacturer instructions.
- ▶ Before running your air conditioner, inspect the equipment and be sure that all coils, filters and circuit breakers are clean and functioning properly.
- ▶ Consider upgrading your air conditioner to a more energy efficient model, which can save you money in energy costs. When looking at various units, look for the Season Energy Efficiency Rating (SEER), the most well-known efficiency rating. Also, check that the air conditioner has a label indicating that it has been tested by a certified laboratory. To help with costs, look for available govern-

WHAT IS SEER?

The efficiency of central air conditioning units is governed by U.S. law and regulated by the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). Every air conditioning unit is assigned an efficiency rating known as its “seasonal energy efficiency ratio” (SEER). The SEER is defined as the total cooling output (in British thermal units or Btu) provided by the unit during its normal annual usage period divided by its total energy input (in watt-hours) during the same period.

ment or utility incentives.

- ▶ While running your air conditioner, always be sure that all windows and doors are closed to increase operating efficiency. This seems obvious but you might be surprised who opened their bedroom window and forgot to close it.
- ▶ Sealing ducts, increasing insulation, and plugging leaks in the home can also help improve the overall efficiency of the air conditioner. Exhaust and ceiling fans can increase the air flow in the home and reduce humidity in rooms that are often warmer, such as bathrooms and kitchens.

▶ Trim foliage at least 2 feet around the air conditioner. Clearing the area around the unit ensures that airflow to the appliance is not blocked.

Additional ways to save energy include shutting off and unplugging unneeded electronics and using appliances such as washers and dryers during cooler times of the day. Turning off lights that are not being used and closing drapes to keep out the sun can also help reduce the amount of cooling that is needed. For more detailed information on efficiency improvements, check with your cooperative about scheduling an energy audit. **KCL**



Sealing duct work in the home can help improve the overall efficiency of the air conditioner.

Get more tips on keeping your home safe and cool this summer at SafeElectricity.org.