

# Florida Public Service Commission

## Consumer E-Newsletter

August 2008



### Summertime Savings

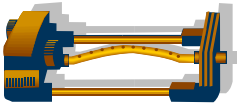
Our long, hot Florida summers result in the highest utility bills of the year. Although summer is drawing to a close, we still have opportunities to save money on our utility bills.

Suppose you have changed your air conditioner filter every month, set the thermostat to 78 degrees, kept the evaporator coils clean, changed all the light bulbs in the house to compact fluorescent bulbs, and insulated the attic to R26. What else can you do to lower the electric bill? Here are some other useful energy and money saving tips:

- Invest in an energy efficient refrigerator. Many homeowners buy a new refrigerator but keep the old one in the garage. The problem is that the old refrigerator is usually less efficient than modern [Energy Star® qualified](#) models and will use more electricity. In a hot garage, that old unit may run almost continuously. A new, 25 cubic foot high-efficiency refrigerator in the kitchen costs about \$5-6 a month to operate. An old, inefficient unit in a hot garage during the summer can cost \$25 or more each month.
- Get in the habit of turning off the elements or surface units on your electric stove several minutes before completing the allotted cooking time. The heating element will stay hot long enough to finish the cooking without wasting electricity.
- Never boil water in an uncovered pan. Water will come to a boil faster and use less energy in a kettle or covered pan.

For more tips on how to save energy and money during the summer, see [101 Causes of High Summer Utility Bills](#).

### Lawn Watering – How Much is Enough?



It's that time of year when we drag out the sprinklers to water the lawn. How do you know just how much water your lawn needs? Here are some lawn watering tips offered by the [Southwest Florida Water Management District](#):

- Most lawns need only one inch of water every five to seven days in the summer and every 10 to 14 days in the winter. A heavy rain means you may not have to water at all!
- Buy a rain gauge to determine how much rain or irrigation your yard has received.
- Instead of beautifying your yard with plants and flowers that need a lot of water, try some xeriscape (pronounced ZERE-AH-SCAPE) techniques. This landscaping method uses native and drought-tolerant plants, mulch to hold in moisture, and grouping plants according to their water and light needs. Call your [county extension office](#) to get more detailed information on xeriscaping.
- Raise the blade on your lawn mower to at least three inches high or to its highest level. Closely-clipped grass makes the roots work harder, thus requiring more water.
- Water your lawn only on the days and times allowed if your county has watering restrictions.

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#### Utility Problems?

File An Online Complaint



#### Brochures Reports and Maps



#### Have Questions?

Visit our FAQ's



- Check sprinkler systems to make sure they work properly.
- Be sure sprinklers do not spray water on driveways or streets.



## Staying Cool With Ceiling Fans

Ceiling fans can keep you comfortable while helping to reduce energy consumption.

Like a nice breeze on a warm day, moving air offers relief from heat and humidity by evaporative cooling. The evaporative cooling effect allows you to adjust your thermostat upward by as much as eight degrees, resulting in a significant reduction in the time the air conditioner must operate. In many cases, by staying cool with ceiling fans, the air conditioner can be turned off entirely.

Additional reductions and savings are gained in cooler seasons when a ceiling fan is used to recirculate heated air that would otherwise remain trapped or stratified near the ceiling. Just reverse the direction of the blade rotation to pull the cooler air up to the ceiling, forcing the warmer air down to floor level.

For more information on buying and using ceiling fans, check out the Energy Star® Web page on [ceiling fans](#).



## Home Energy Audits Lead to Savings

How does your home measure up for energy efficiency? You can find out by contacting your electric utility, thanks to the Florida Statute that requires each utility to offer energy audits to residential customers. Most large utilities also offer energy audits to commercial and industrial customers.

In a walk-through audit, a company auditor will come to your house and examine your home and its energy use. Insulation, thermostat, air-conditioning, windows, doors, and other items will be checked for efficiency and leaks. The auditor will recommend low-cost or no-cost energy saving practices and measures that you can take to lower your monthly electric bill.

Many utilities also offer online energy surveys that you can fill out any time. After answering questions about your home and energy use, you will receive personalized audit results and recommendations.

In order to help customers use energy more efficiently at home, larger utilities often have rebate programs for the homeowner implementing audit recommendations. Check with your utility for details to see if your improvement projects qualify for a discount or rebate, especially if weatherization measures, attic insulation, or heat pumps may be involved.

For more information on conducting your own home energy audit, visit these Web sites:

- U.S. Department of Energy <http://www.eere.energy.gov/consumer>
- Alliance to Save Energy [http://www.ase.org/section/\\_audience/consumers](http://www.ase.org/section/_audience/consumers)

Click [here](#) to subscribe to the Florida Public Service Commission's E-Newsletter

Bookmark these valuable Web sites for hurricane information:



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[Federal Emergency Management Agency](#)



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**Electric Utilities Storm Information:**

[Florida Power & Light Co.](#)  
[Florida Public Utilities](#)  
[Gulf Power](#)  
[Progress Energy](#)  
[Tampa Electric Company](#)