

## **Top 5 Ways to Save Money on Your Electric Bills**

By Eleanor Foerste

April showers bring May flowers but hot steamy summers with kids home from school bring high electric bills. Follow these tips to get some relief on this monthly expense.

1. Free Energy Audit. Your local electric provider may offer free telephone assistance or send a qualified technician to your home to inspect for air leaks and make suggestions to save you money each month. Some offer rebates for equipment you were going to replace due to old age or because it stopped working. Light bulbs, attic insulation, water heaters or air conditioners may qualify for financial incentives and every little bit helps.

2. Know before you go. Always ask for information before you shop to replace equipment so you get the best and most efficient you can afford. UF IFAS Extension has developed a series of fact sheets to help you understand the terminology and be a smart shopper. <http://buildgreen.ufl.edu> and click the Home Energy Fact Sheets tab.

3. Clean filters are a must. Change or clean air conditioning filters monthly. Some products tell you they will last for 3 months, but dust accumulates and it is better for the air conditioning equipment to change the filter each month. If you do not know where the filter is located, ask a friend or family member to help you locate it. Look at the arrows so you install it properly to match the air flow of the unit.

4. Seal gaps and leaks. Don't air condition your attic or your neighborhood. For do-it-yourselfers, a DIY project is to "seek the leaks." Leaky duct work that carries conditioned air throughout the house is a huge waste of energy and money. Use approved tape and mastic to seal cracks and connections to keep the conditioned air inside your house. If you see daylight around closed doorways or feel air moving at closed window gaps, seal the openings with weather stripping. Seal openings around the home where pipes and wires enter with the appropriate caulk or expanding sealant.

5. Turn off and unplug. Turn off ceiling fans and other fans when you are not in a room. Unplug cell phone chargers, toasters, coffee pots and other items that draw power and have glowing lights even though they are "off". If you must leave computers on, turn off printers and monitors when they are not being used. Each item left on could use the same power as a 15 watt light bulb.