

HOME & GARDEN

Reduce your summer energy bills (276 words)

(NC)—Are you concerned about paying costly energy bills to keep your home air conditioned during the summer? It is possible to keep your cool without remortgaging your house.

The key is using energy wisely. Here are a few ways to keep your air conditioning equipment running efficiently while reducing your cooling costs.

- Keep grass clippings, leaves and other debris away from your outdoor air conditioning unit.
- Keep furniture, carpeting and draperies away from vents and grills in the home.
- Change or clean your system filter once a month (depending on the type of filter).
- Use a programmable thermostat that allows you to cool your home only when you need to.
- Keep west-facing drapes or shades drawn in the afternoon.
- In some cases, it may be advisable to keep your furnace fan running to keep air moving. Ceiling fans are even better, because they draw less power.
- Consider installing an attic ventilator – pulling hot air out of your home can keep your home cooler in the summer.
- Have your cooling system checked annually. Having a qualified service technician check your equipment will help ensure that your air conditioning works efficiently and will not let you down when the heat is on.

For further advice and for regular service, contact a cooling contractor who is a member of the Heating Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada (HRAI). HRAI membership tells you that the company has the appropriate licenses to install and service the cooling equipment that they sell.

More information about locating an HRAI member company in your area is available online at www.hrai.ca or by calling 1-877-467-4724 (HRAI).

- News Canada

Maximize value and efficiency with central A/C replacement

(377 words + 1 photo)

(NC)—Contrary to popular belief, an air conditioner does not cool by adding cool air to your home. It cools primarily by removing heat and moisture from the air.

Canadian residents might also be surprised to hear that larger capacity units may actually result in less effective cooling for their homes.

“It’s important to have all the facts when replacing your central air conditioning or heat pump system,” says Martin Luymes at HRAI, the Heating, Refrigeration and Air Conditioning Institute of Canada. “After all, you will be relying on this system to maintain the comfort of your home comfort for many years to come.”

A central air conditioning system has two key components, an outdoor (condensing) unit and an indoor (evaporator coil) unit.

“This is why these systems are often referred to as “split” systems,” Luymes explained. “The two components are designed to work together as a team to provide maximum efficiency and comfort. When you install a new air conditioning system in your home, it is important to ensure that the outdoor unit is properly “matched” to the indoor unit. Failing to replace one of the components, or not properly matching the two units may result in substandard performance. You may save some money up front, but your home will not be as comfortable and the desired energy (and cost) savings will not be realized. The system may also fail prematurely, causing added aggravation.”

According to Luymes, it is also very important to ensure that your air conditioning system is properly “sized” to meet the cooling needs of your home.

“Contractors should perform a proper “heat gain” calculation to determine the amount of cooling required. While under-sizing the system will result in insufficient cooling when you need it most, over-sizing of the system can lead to a number of unexpected problems, including uneven cooling in the home, rapid fluctuations in temperature, premature system wear and tear, and less than optimal energy efficiency.”

Residential air conditioning systems should always be installed and maintained by a qualified, licensed, and well-trained technician who will ensure and can verify that the system has been sized and matched properly.

More information about finding a qualified air conditioning contractor anywhere in Canada is available online at www.hrai.ca or by calling 1-877-467-4724 (HRAI).

- News Canada



Read up about radon in your home (352 words)

(NC)—You might be starting to hear about radon levels in homes. Being informed and aware is an important first step in understanding the potential risks associated with exposure to radon.

While radon is not uncommon in the air we breathe, the push to seal up houses to save heating and energy costs is putting this indoor air pollutant on the map as one of those things you need to know about.

So what is radon? It’s a colourless, odourless and tasteless radioactive gas that is formed by the breakdown of uranium found in soil, rock and groundwater which escapes into the outdoor air. Because it is diluted to low concentrations, it’s usually not a concern, but when it enters an enclosed space that is not properly ventilated, it can be.

In some cases homes can experience negative indoor pressure. This phenomenon by its nature will draw outdoor air – including radon - into the home. As with all indoor air pollutants from pet dander to CO₂, it’s important to use good ventilation practices to ensure these pollutants don’t accumulate to unsafe levels.

A good tactic to avoid potential problems is to start with the basics of balancing indoor and outdoor pressure. For example, when using an open fireplace or any other device that draws outside air in, open a nearby window. When choosing a ventilation system for your home, make sure that it balances both supply and exhaust functions; a good choice is a heat recovery ventilator (HRV). And never underestimate the value of the tried and true exhaust fan in your bathroom and range hood in your kitchen.

To find out about radon and what you can do to keep your homes safe and sound, Health Canada and the CMHC have issued *Radon: A Guide for Canadian Homeowners*. A copy of this document can be found at www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/odpub/pdf/61945.pdf or you can visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/radon for more information. You can always talk to a qualified ventilation professional who can help you determine the steps you should take to keep your indoor environment safe. You can find one in your area online at www.hrai.ca.

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