



ENERGY EFFICIENCY



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SCOTT'S ENERGY SPOT : **PREPARE FOR SUMMER**

Tips from Firelands Electric's energy advisor

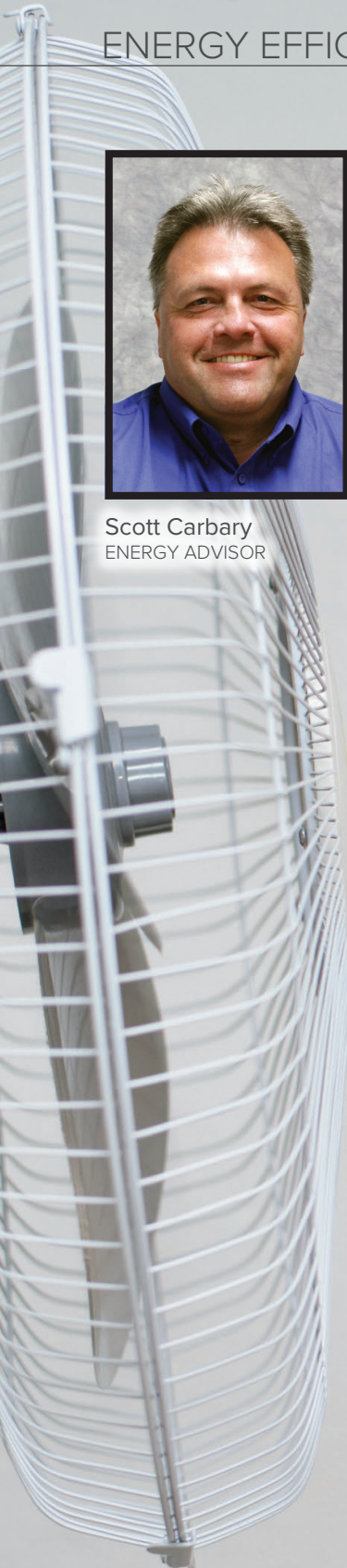
Saying that Ohio's weather is unpredictable is an understatement. As I write this (in late March), yesterday's high was nearly 80 degrees, and it felt a little humid. However, today it's in the mid-30s and the heat is on! Next week's weather is anyone's guess.

Summer will arrive eventually and, as every Ohioan knows, that means hot, muggy air that causes the majority of us to start up the air conditioner — and brings increased energy use. Keeping your cool doesn't have to break your budget, however. By taking some proactive measures now, you can minimize the impact on your energy bills later this summer.

Before we get into specific tips, remember that the most effective first step to energy savings is to determine if investing in a particular update will have a worthwhile payback. As your cooperative's energy advisor, I often hear about members spending large sums of money on home upgrades that take years, or even decades, to recoup the initial investment. Ultimately, the homeowner may have saved very little money. So, ask yourself: Will this update save me more money than what it costs to install?

If you need assistance with determining payback, or are considering renewable options, contact the co-op office at 1-800-533-8658 to schedule a free, in-home consultation. We are always happy to provide upgrade recommendations and payback calculations based on the energy use of a member's home. You can also find several free calculators online, including some at www.energy.gov/energysaver.

Now let's take a look at a few home improvements that will give you the most savings for the smallest investment during the summer months:



- Add insulation. Insulation upgrades can result in savings during both the heating and cooling seasons, which maximizes their payback. According to energystar.gov, homeowners can reduce the cost to operate their HVAC system by 10% to 20%, depending on the insulation levels prior to the updates. Most of Ohio is in Climate Zone 5, so the recommended insulation R-values are R-49 to R-60 in the attic, R-20 to R-24 for the walls, and R-25 to R-30 for floors.
- Air sealing. This typically involves adding caulking and/or weatherstripping and can save members up to 11% on their cooling bills. A common area for air leakage is the rim joist/sill plate area, which is located at the joint, or the area between the basement wall and the house framing. Dirty or discolored insulation in the cavity bays is an indicator of air leakage, and can often be corrected by the homeowner. See the section on insulation and air sealing on the cooperative's website at www.firelandsec.com/energy-education for DIY guides.
- Tuning and cleaning your heating and cooling system. Doing so at least once or twice a year helps your system operate 10% to 20% more efficiently. According to energystar.gov, even a layer of dirt as thin as the thickness of a sheet of paper on the outside or inside air conditioner coil can increase the system's overall operating costs by 10% to 20%.
- Sealing the ductwork. Along with insulating ductwork in any areas that are not heated or cooled, sealing ductwork can save money and improve comfort. The EPA estimates the average U.S. home loses 20% to 30 % of its conditioned air through the basement or attic. The Department of Energy estimates this number to be closer to 40%. Sealing leaky ductwork is often an easy fix that can be done by a member. Once again, you can find DIY information on the Energy Education page on Firelands' website. (But remember, duct tape is not for ductwork!)
- Other no-cost or low-cost improvements that can help reduce summer energy bills include:
 1. Close blinds or drapes on the west side of the home during the hottest part of the day.
 2. Reverse ceiling fans to rotate counterclockwise and push cooler air down.
 3. Clean or change HVAC system filters.
 4. Use appliances like the microwave, crockpot, or even your grill to avoid adding more heat to your living space.

With a little preparation, it is possible to keep cool and stay within your budget once the heat and humidity of a typical Ohio summer arrive. And as always, if you need additional help making your home energy efficient, contact Firelands Electric's office at 1-800-533-8658 to schedule your free consultation.

MEMORIAL DAY REMEMBER & HONOR



The Firelands Electric Cooperative office will be closed on

Monday, May 25

to honor those who gave their lives for our freedom.

As always, emergency service is available 24/7 by calling 1-800-533-8658.