

Time for a Fall Tuneup

As summer comes to an end, assess the health of your home to maximize savings



Thermostat

A programmable thermostat allows you to control settings to suit your climate, schedule and temperature preferences.

Consider installing a smart thermostat.

After installation, input your schedule and temperature preferences. As you change the settings, the thermostat adjusts to minimize energy use. Bonus: You can control the thermostat remotely with a smartphone.

Don't adjust the thermostat drastically. Your home will not heat or cool more quickly.

Keep the temperature at or below 68 F during the day and cooler at night.

Save up to 10% on your monthly heating and cooling bill by turning back your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees for eight hours a day.



Windows and Doors

Energy loss and drafts often occur in the cracks between window components.

Use weatherstripping where a window's movable parts meet the window frame.

The seam between the window frame and the wall is a common source of air leakage. Fill any crack less than 1/4-inch wide with caulk. For larger cracks, use expanding foam and paint over it.

Use window coverings to cut energy costs. Cellular shades, curtains and draperies can provide increased comfort year-round.

Use a door sweep—a flexible piece of rubber or plastic held to the door's lower edge by a piece of aluminum—on an exterior door to block drafts.



Insulation

Insulation reduces heat loss during winter and heat gain during summer. Before you add or replace insulation, check your current levels.

Start with your attic. Aim for at least 14 inches of insulation for warmer climates and at least 18 inches in colder climates. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends an R-value—which refers to the insulation's ability to resist heat—of about R-60 for most regions.

According to DOE, air leaks are among the most significant sources of energy loss in a home. They also are the easiest to fix. Check for leaks throughout your home, including insulation.



Heating and Cooling

Frequently replacing your furnace filter is one of the easiest and cheapest ways to keep your HVAC system running efficiently. A clogged filter causes your system to work harder and can shorten its life span.

Depending on the home, filters should be changed every month or every other month when the HVAC system is in use.

Schedule an annual service on your HVAC system. A clean system is safer and more efficient. A preventive service call for a tuneup and cleaning usually is less expensive and less stressful than an emergency service call if your equipment fails.

Leaky furnace ducts mean higher utility bills. Improve their performance by sealing exposed ducts in the attic, crawl space, unfinished basement and garage.



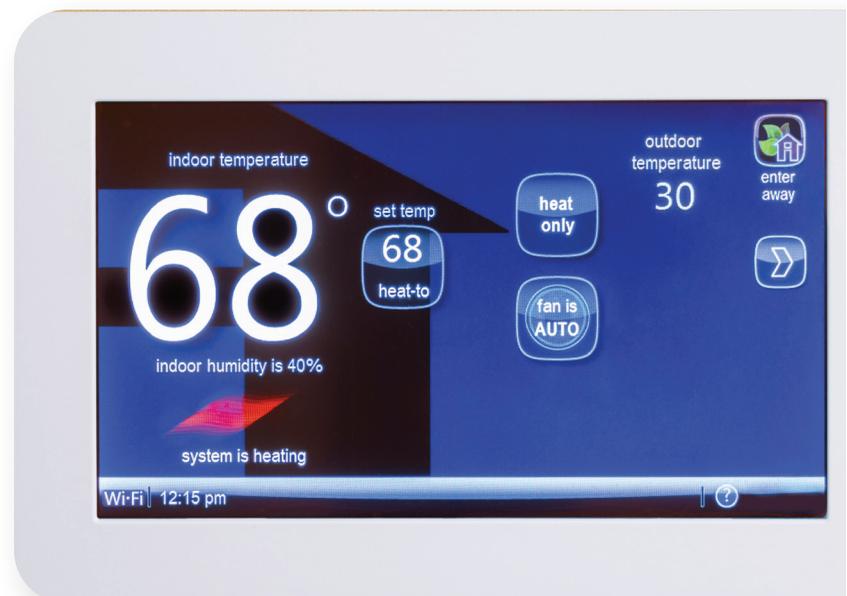
Outdoors

Trim shrubs, and clear leaves and other debris.

Keep branches away from the house and electrical wires to prevent property damage or power interference. Cut cracked and diseased limbs close to the trunk. For large jobs, hire a pro.

Rake yard debris away from the outdoor compressor unit of your heat pump. A heat pump needs good circulation to work efficiently, so make sure there is a 2-foot clearance around the outdoor compressor.

Ensure gutters are clear and downspouts are correctly connected so water drains away from your home. The dirt grade around your home should slope away from the house. ■



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Conserve Energy to Lower Your Bill

Everyone in America is contending with the high cost of electricity

Though high fuel costs are causing high electricity prices, remember: You only pay for what you use, which means you can help control your bill by using less electricity.

Your bill is calculated by multiplying the rate per kilowatt-hour by the number of kWh you use. The fewer kWhs used, the lower your bill.

Lowering Your Electric Bill

- Shut off appliances and electronics—including lights and fans—when they are not in use.
- Replace incandescent light bulbs with LEDs, which are at least 75% more efficient.
- Install a programmable smart thermostat to automatically adjust temperatures throughout the day.

- Set the thermostat fan to auto so it runs only when the system is cooling.
 - Keep an eye on your thermostat and try to leave it at the warmest comfortable temperature during the cooling season.
 - Use ceiling and space fans to circulate air and supplement the air conditioner.
 - Seal gaps around windows and exterior doors with caulk or weatherstripping to prevent outside air from entering your home and cooled air from leaving it.
 - Check insulation in the attic, floor and ceilings.
 - To improve system performance, regularly replace your system's air filter according to manufacturer's instructions.
- For more tips, guides and action steps, visit energy.gov. ■

DID YOU
KNOW?



According to a U.S. Department of Energy survey:

- 34 million households set the thermostat at one temperature and leave it there most of the time.
- 47% of households have a programmable thermostat, but only 13% actually program the thermostat to automatically adjust temperatures to save energy.