

GENERAL  
MANAGERBRAD  
BIERSTEDT

## Take Control of Your Summer Electric Bills

**IN TEXAS, WE EXPECT** summers to be hot, and most of us do all we can to keep our homes as comfortable as possible while outdoor temperatures edge upward. When it comes to electricity, each of us has the power to help control our costs—we just have to make thoughtful choices to make energy savings pay off in dollars and cents.

If you don't have trees, a porch overhang or awnings that shade windows exposed to the afternoon sun, there's a good chance radiant heat is driving up indoor temperatures in your home and adding to your cooling costs.

Window coverings can help. Blinds or shades can deflect intense sunlight, and draperies lined with a thermal radiant barrier can block up to 95% of sunlight and 100% of ultraviolet rays.



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Comfort and cooling are easier to maintain when you take advantage of airflow. A ceiling fan can pull warm air up above your living zone, making a difference during summer months. The evaporative effect of circulating air blowing across our skin makes us more comfortable, but that benefit disappears when we leave the room. So turn off fans in unoccupied rooms to conserve energy.

Air conditioner filters have a lot to do with airflow through your AC system. Dirty filters restrict circu-

lation through your returns, making your AC work harder. If you can see dirt in a filter, it's likely at least 50% clogged. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations on replacing disposable filters or cleaning permanent ones, and consider checking them more frequently if you have pets.

You can achieve a 10% savings on cooling costs by turning up your thermostat 7–10 degrees from its normal setting for eight hours a day—while you're sleeping or away at work or school, for example. Turning off the air conditioning or raising the thermostat setting 20–30 minutes before you leave home can add to those savings.

You can save more money and electricity by shifting some of the most energy-intensive activities away from the hottest hours of the day. Cooking,

doing laundry and using power tools can increase heat and humidity inside your home, making it harder to reach or maintain a comfortable temperature.

Remember, controlling energy costs always works better with buy-in from everyone in your household.

- ▶ One open window anywhere can be like an uncapped chimney, pulling outdoors the conditioned air you pay to cool.

- ▶ A gaming system, computer or TV left on but idle produces nearly as much heat as it does when it's actually in use.

- ▶ Lighting and ventilation fans add convenience and comfort when they're needed, but when left on

and unattended, they waste energy.

- ▶ A bag of ice poured into a cooler will chill summer beverages as effectively and less expensively than an aging refrigerator in a hot garage.

Check with us for more ways to control costs and avoid seasonal billing spikes this summer. ■