

MARCH 2009 HOA Article

Be clean and green with springtime energy savings

Anyone who's ever had the daunting task of cleaning through the clutter collected throughout the year can speak to the need for reduced consumption. Likewise, incorporating some energy-efficient improvements into your spring cleaning can help you save a bundle all year long.

One of the best places to begin is in the kitchen.

The next time you dust your house, don't forget the fridge. You can keep energy costs down by dusting the coils to keep it clean and efficient.

Before you step away, check the seal in your refrigerator door. You can easily test your seals by closing the refrigerator door on a protruding dollar bill. If you can easily remove the dollar bill while the door is closed, you may need to repair the seals. Other signs of a possible problem include cold air around the closed door and moisture collecting. If your refrigerator seals leak, you're wasting energy.

Is it time to replace your appliances? If so, look for those with the Energy Star logo. A 10 year-old refrigerator could cost you \$182 per year to operate compared to a new Energy Star refrigerator that only costs \$68 per year. That's an annual savings of \$114.

If you replace your refrigerator, try to resist the urge to move the old one to the typically warmer garage. If you do, it will cost you more than \$200 per year to operate — nearly twice the amount you managed to save by upgrading to the more energy-efficient refrigerator.

Next, turn on the hot water in your kitchen sink and place a thermometer under the faucet. Ideally, the temperature should read 120 degrees. If the temperature exceeds 120 degrees, you could be wasting energy and money. Turning down the dial on your water heater can result in significant energy and cost savings – up to \$85 per year.

While we're on the topic of water temperature, don't worry about washing certain loads of laundry in hot water. Believe it or not, your laundry detergent works just as well with cold water. Always wash your clothes with cold water and save up to 50 cents per load.

Even the pickiest spring cleaners sometimes find the need to store belongings for the long term. While placing boxes in the attic, take a look around. If your attic insulation appears thin, it may be time to upgrade. You may also want to consider having a reflective coating applied to your roof. Either of these upgrades can make a dramatic difference in the amount of energy it takes to cool your home.

As an added bonus, both of these upgrades could qualify for Progress Energy incentives. Depending on the type of insulation you choose to install, you may qualify for an incentive of as

much as \$100 plus up to 7 cents for each square foot of living space above 1500. Should you decide to install a reflective roof product, you may be eligible to receive an incentive of up to \$150.

All of your spring cleaning may have made you work up a sweat. Try to resist the urge to turn down the air conditioner. Setting your thermostat at 78 degrees instead of a 74 during the warmer months can help you save an additional \$262 per year.

To find additional ways to save energy this spring and all year long, schedule a free Home Energy Check with one of Progress Energy Florida's energy advisors. The company offers its customers a free evaluation of your home to analyze its overall energy use and provides a customized report with specific recommendations that can help you save energy and money on your monthly power bill. For more information about a Home Energy Check, visit savethewatts.com or call 1.877.364.9003.