

July 2012 HOA article

Declare your independence from high energy usage

Every July 4, Americans celebrate their independence. The holiday brings to mind countless festivities – from parades and fireworks to backyard barbeques and picnics. As you prepare for the merriment, Progress Energy encourages you to practice energy efficiency in your home to save money and reduce waste. In honor of the separation of the Thirteen Colonies from Great Britain in 1776, Progress Energy offers 13 ways to declare your independence from high energy usage this summer:

1. During the summer months, **set your thermostat to the highest comfortable setting**. Progress Energy recommends 78 to 80 degrees. For each degree above 78, you can save 7 to 10 percent on your cooling costs.
2. For central air conditioning systems, **keep the fan switch on your thermostat in the “auto” position when cooling**. Having the fan switch “on” continuously could cost an extra \$25 a month on your electric bill.
3. **Use your window shades, blinds and drapes** to keep the sun from overheating your home.
4. **Schedule routine air conditioning system maintenance**. Cooling typically accounts for up to 30 percent of your electricity cost in the summer. A thorough examination can ensure your system is operating at maximum efficiency.
5. **Clean or change your air conditioning filters monthly**. Dirty filters can reduce airflow and increase operating costs.
6. **Use a ceiling fan or portable fan** to supplement your air conditioning. A fan can make you feel three to four degrees cooler (and only costs a half-cent per hour to operate), so you can set your thermostat a few degrees higher to save on cooling costs. In the summer, **set fans to rotate in a counter-clockwise direction**. Keep in mind that fans cool people, not rooms, so use them only in occupied living spaces.
7. When planning your picnic or party, **consider grilling out rather than using your oven to cook**. Using the oven on a hot summer day forces your air conditioner to work harder, which can lead to higher energy use.
8. But then what is the holiday without the classic American dessert – apple pie? If the family insists on eating your homemade pie, **refrain from opening the oven door while it bakes**. Every time you open the oven door to check on your pie, the oven temperature drops 25 to 30 degrees, wasting energy.
9. **Minimize preheating time**. Although preheating is a must for baking pastries and breads, it is often unnecessary for other foods.
10. For those side items, **opt to cook with a microwave**. Microwaves draw less than half the power of a conventional oven and foods cook in about one-fourth the time, greatly reducing cooking costs.
11. **Consolidate**. The extra refrigerator in your garage or utility room is costing you. Combine your food and drinks into one indoor refrigerator and save up to \$20 per month.
12. **Keep a fully stocked, but not overstuffed, fridge**. The mass of cold items in a full fridge helps the temperature recover after the door has been opened.
13. To reduce the opening and closing of the refrigerator during your July 4 barbeque, **keep cold drinks in coolers or ice chests**.

But why limit your energy savings to the summer season? Commemorate your independence from high energy usage all year long with a free Home Energy Check. The Home Energy Check provides customized energy-saving advice and determines your eligibility for valuable rebates toward energy-efficient home improvements. The service can be performed over the phone, online or in person, where an Energy Advisor is on hand to address questions specific to your home. A Home Energy Check is a prerequisite for all Progress Energy rebates toward energy-efficient home improvements.

To sign up for a free Home Energy Check, call **1.877.364.9003** or visit **progress-energy.com/save**, where you'll also find more than 100 energy-saving tips.