**Prepare Your Home**

**To Beat The Heat This Summer**

***Stay Cool While Spending Less***

Summer months can bring some of the highest energy costs of the year with the high demand for air conditioning. Keeping your home comfortable can be expensive, but it can also be dangerous. If your air conditioner runs too often, it can stress your home’s electric system and put you at risk for shock or fire.

To avoid a tragedy, and save money, Safe Electricity has the following tips for energy efficiency this summer:

* Update your insulation. This will keep cool air in your home and hot air out. You can add more insulation on top of existing insulation in your attic. For more information on the type of insulation you should use, visit EnergySavers.gov.
* Ventilate the attic. When the outside temperature is in the 90s, your attic can easily reach 140 degrees Fahrenheit. Adequately sized vents and/or an attic fan can help keep hot air from building up.
* Get the air conditioner ready**.**Shut off power to the unit before cleaning it. On the inside, wash or vacuum cleanable filters, and replace disposable ones. Outside, clear leaves and other debris away from the condensing unit. Hose off any accumulated dirt. It is a good idea to call a professional to inspect your unit early in the summer.
* Put a timer or programmable thermostat on your air conditioner. Leave it on a higher temperature while you’re away, and set it to cool the house half an hour before you return home.
* Install awnings over windows exposed to direct sunlight.
* Consider installing ceiling fans. On moderately warm days, a ceiling fan may be enough to keep you comfortable. On warmer days, you can decrease your air conditioner use by using a fan.

Even in summer, you don’t have to sacrifice comfort to stay within your budget. Here are a few easily achieved cost saving tips:

* Open windows and doors and let outside air cool your house on moderate days. Be sure to keep them closed when you’re operating the air conditioner.
* Avoid unnecessary trips in and out of the house. Heat and humidity come in each time you open the door.
* Keep the sun out of your house. Close blinds, shades or draperies during the hottest part of the day. Consider planting fast-growing trees and shrubs near your home, but away from power lines, to provide shade.
* Set lamps, TV sets, and other heat-producing devices away from the air conditioner thermostat. Heat from the lamp could cause the thermostat to read higher temperature and keep the air conditioner running more than necessary.

If you are shopping for a new air conditioning unit, look for one with the blue Energy Star label. An Energy Star air conditioner will save money in the long run by using less electricity. Your electric utility or state may have incentives for purchasing a more efficient model.