

Beat the Heat and Save Money

By Sustainable Belmont

Summer is the peak season for electricity usage in New England due to the increased use of air conditioning (AC). Power grid operators have imposed new charges on electric utilities to encourage them to conserve electricity during peak periods (typically between 1:00 and 4:00 pm). These charges will be passed on to you in the form of higher electric bills, beginning next year. If we collectively reduce our use of electricity *now*, we can reduce our cost of electricity for the *entire year* in 2008.

Three tips to reduce energy use:

1. If you have central AC, install a programmable thermostat and set it at 78 degrees for the hours you're home and 85 degrees when away. You can reduce energy consumption one to three percent for each degree the thermostat is set above 72 degrees.
2. To have a cool home when you return from work or a trip, program your thermostat to turn on the AC 30 minutes before your arrival. Plug window ACs into timers.
3. Reduce the need for AC by pulling down window shades and closing off rooms that don't need to be cooled.

Reducing energy use during peak hours also improves air quality and lowers emissions of the heat-trapping gases that drive climate change.

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