

“Save Energy while staying cool”
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As spring approaches bringing much anticipated warmer temperatures, it's time to think about how to save energy and money while cooling our homes. Since in the typical Florida home the heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system accounts for more than 40% of the home's energy use, and the largest portion is used for cooling; we need to pay special attention to this area. To begin, keep heat out of the home as much as possible by closing the curtains or shades on the south and west-facing windows of the home during the day. This is where the worst heat penetration occurs. Consider installing white shades, drapes, or blinds which will reflect heat instead of absorbing it. Another way to reduce the heat inside the home involves purchasing compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) to replace incandescent bulbs. Start by replacing the lights that are used most frequently. 90% of the energy of incandescent bulbs produces heat and only 10% of the bulb's energy creates light. This means if you have a lot of incandescent light bulbs in your home, not only are they less efficient than CFLs (which use one-fourth of the energy of an incandescent bulb while producing about the same light), incandescent lights also heat up the house and cause the air conditioner to work harder. This is definitely not a good thing in Florida during the summer. CFLs definitely cost more upfront than incandescent lights but they save money in the long run because they are so much more energy efficient and they last up to ten times longer than incandescent lights. Proper maintenance of your HVAC (heating, ventilation, & air conditioning) system is

also important. Be sure to change A/C filters often as dirty filters restrict airflow causing the system to run longer, increasing energy use. As with any piece of equipment, regular maintenance of your HVAC system reduces energy usage, prolongs its life, and improves indoor air quality. Before the hot summer begins is a good time to have a professional check your HVAC system to make sure everything is working properly. Check with your utility company for a free or low cost energy audit of your home, and ask about any rebates, incentives, or loan programs to support your energy saving efforts.

For more information, call Monica Bonsett at the Extension office at 352-527-5713. Citrus County Extension links the public with the University of Florida/IFAS' knowledge, research, and resources to address youth, family, community, and agricultural needs. All programs and related activities sponsored for, or assisted by, the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences are open to all persons with non-discrimination with respect to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, political opinions, or affiliations.

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