

# Conserving is Saving: Start at Home!



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Greetings to you once again, residents and businesses of Satellite Beach. In this edition of the *Beachcaster* we will be discussing simple, common sense ways that you can make your homes more water and energy efficient, and subsequently, easier on your pocket book by way of reduced utility bills. But first, you should know that by the time of this article's printing, the City will have completed the second phase of energy efficiency audit evaluations of various City buildings. This is the next step toward making these facilities more environmentally friendly, while at the same time becoming more pleasant places to work and visit, and less costly to operate. This is all part of the energy grant that the City was awarded, which was described in the previous installment of this series. You will be provided with a detailed update on this important project in a future edition of the *Beachcaster*.

Now, let's talk about some ways that you can make your home more efficient and economical. One of the most productive things to do is a home energy and water use evaluation. Both Florida Power & Light (FPL) and St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) offer free methods for you to evaluate your home's energy and water usage. You can find FPL's "**Online Home Energy Survey**" at:

[http://www.fpl.com/residential/energy\\_saving/programs/ohes.shtml](http://www.fpl.com/residential/energy_saving/programs/ohes.shtml). Similarly, SJRWMD's "**Home Water Use Survey**" can be located at:

<http://www.sjrwmd.com/waterconservation/survey.html>. These are extremely useful tools to help you identify where you are using the most energy and water, and thus the areas that would be most productive for you to address for potential savings.

After completing a home energy evaluation, it is a good idea to give your home a thorough inspection to see if you can identify areas that need repair or that can be improved upon. Finding an area that needs improvement, even if you aren't able to address it immediately, will help you plan for the future. Here are some common things to look for around the house that could be wasting money:

- Check your air handler air filter monthly. If it is dirty, replace it to restore proper air flow and efficiency. Up to 50% of flow can be blocked by a plugged filter, which means you're missing out on 50% of your air conditioner's efficiency.
- Check the condition of weather stripping and caulking. Air leaks can increase heating or cooling costs from 20% to 50%. The most likely places to identify leaks are around windows and doors, or where plumbing pipes, light fixtures, cables, or vents penetrate walls.

- Make sure your air conditioning condenser unit is clear of grass, leaves, or other obstructions. Restrictions to air flow will make it work harder and use more energy. Make sure the interior air induction grill is also clear of obstructions.
- Check hot water heaters. In the morning before any usage, both hot and cold pipes should be about the same temperature. If one is hotter than the other, it's possible you have a hot water leak somewhere.
- Check for air duct leaks. Ducts are usually located in a crawl space, attic, and your utility closet. Also check for leaks around the air return box of your air handler.
- Check the condition and quality of your home's insulation in your attic or crawl space. Chances are, if your house was built before 1980, you would do well with more insulation.

As you can see, there are many areas around the house that might be costing you more money than is necessary. After optimizing your home's current configuration, it is also a good idea to keep efficiency in mind when replacing household items. When you need to replace incandescent light bulbs, look into compact fluorescent or LED units, which on average use about 75% less energy and last up to 10 times longer than traditional bulbs. If you're replacing a toilet, faucet or shower head, look into low-flow units, which can save a lot of water over the life of the unit. If you are replacing an air conditioner or appliance, check into high efficiency or Energy Star® rated units. Don't forget to look into potential rebates or incentives from your utility provider, as well, which can help you save even more. Also, watch for free efficiency items that are often given away at community events -- a great way to try them.

All of these are examples of easy to use home conservation items that were obtained free by attending various local community events in the



Space Coast. There is a dish cleaning squeegee, a DVD with water and electricity savings tips, a toilet fill cycle meter, a half gallon per minute sink aerator, a rain water gauge for the lawn, and a compact florescent light bulb.

Following is a list of tips that you can apply at your own home to help you conserve and save!

## TOP 10 ENERGY SAVINGS TIPS

Listed below are 10 easy measures that FPL has identified that can save you money by reducing your energy usage. We encourage you to post these tips in your home so they can serve as helpful reminders of the simplest ways for you to save!

1. Cool your home at 78 degrees or warmer with the thermostat fan switched to auto. For additional savings, raise your thermostat to 82 degrees or warmer when you're away.
2. Heat your home at 68 degrees or cooler with the thermostat fan switched to auto. To save even more, lower your thermostat to 65 degrees or cooler at night or when you're away from home.
3. Reduce your water heater temperature from 140 degrees to 120 degrees, which is the recommended temperature setting according to the U.S. Department of Energy, to save about \$7 a month.
4. Clean or replace the A/C filter regularly to help your unit run more efficiently and trim cooling costs.
5. Turn off your ceiling fan when you leave the room. A fan that runs all the time costs up to \$7 a month.
6. Use your dishwasher to conserve energy. Avoid pre-rinsing dishes to save up to \$70 a year.
7. Limit the time you run your pool pump:
  - Summer - six hours a day
  - Winter - four hours a day
8. Adjust the water level on your washing machine to match the load size, especially when using hot water. Always use a cold rinse.
9. Clean the lint filter in your dryer before every load to dry your clothes faster.
10. Use the auto sensor function on your dryer to conserve energy by not over-drying your clothes.

## TOP 10 WATER SAVINGS TIPS

Listed below are 10 simple ways that we have identified for you to reduce your home water usage. Five indoor tips and five outdoor tips will help you conserve our limited supply of potable drinking water -- and save money at the same time.

### Indoor

1. Check your toilet tank level when filled. It should be at least a half inch below the top of the overflow tube. Otherwise, water might be going right down the drain. Adjust accordingly.
2. Check for toilet leaks. Put a few drops of food coloring in your toilet tank when full. If you see color in the bowl without flushing after 30 minutes, you probably have a leak at or around the flapper valve.
3. Avoid unnecessary toilet flushes. Dispose of tissues and other waste in the trash.
4. Repair dripping faucets. Replace washers or install low flow aerators to further reduce usage. One leaked drop per second wastes about 2,700 gallons of water annually.
5. Turn off the faucet whilst brushing your teeth or shaving. Likewise, turn off the shower water while you lather.

### Outdoor

1. Don't water between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., as you will be losing unnecessary water to evaporation.
2. Water early in the morning. Sprinklers can wash accumulated dew off grass, giving up to an extra 1/10 of an inch of water.
3. Correct and adjust the aim of your sprinklers to minimize overspray on hardscape.
4. Use a rain meter on your lawn so that you're reminded not to water after receiving at least a half inch of rain.
5. Collect rain water runoff in containers to use for irrigation. It's easy and free!

*The information for these tips was gathered from various local sources, including Florida Power & Light, St. Johns River Water Management District, Orlando Utilities Commission, and South Florida Water Management District.*