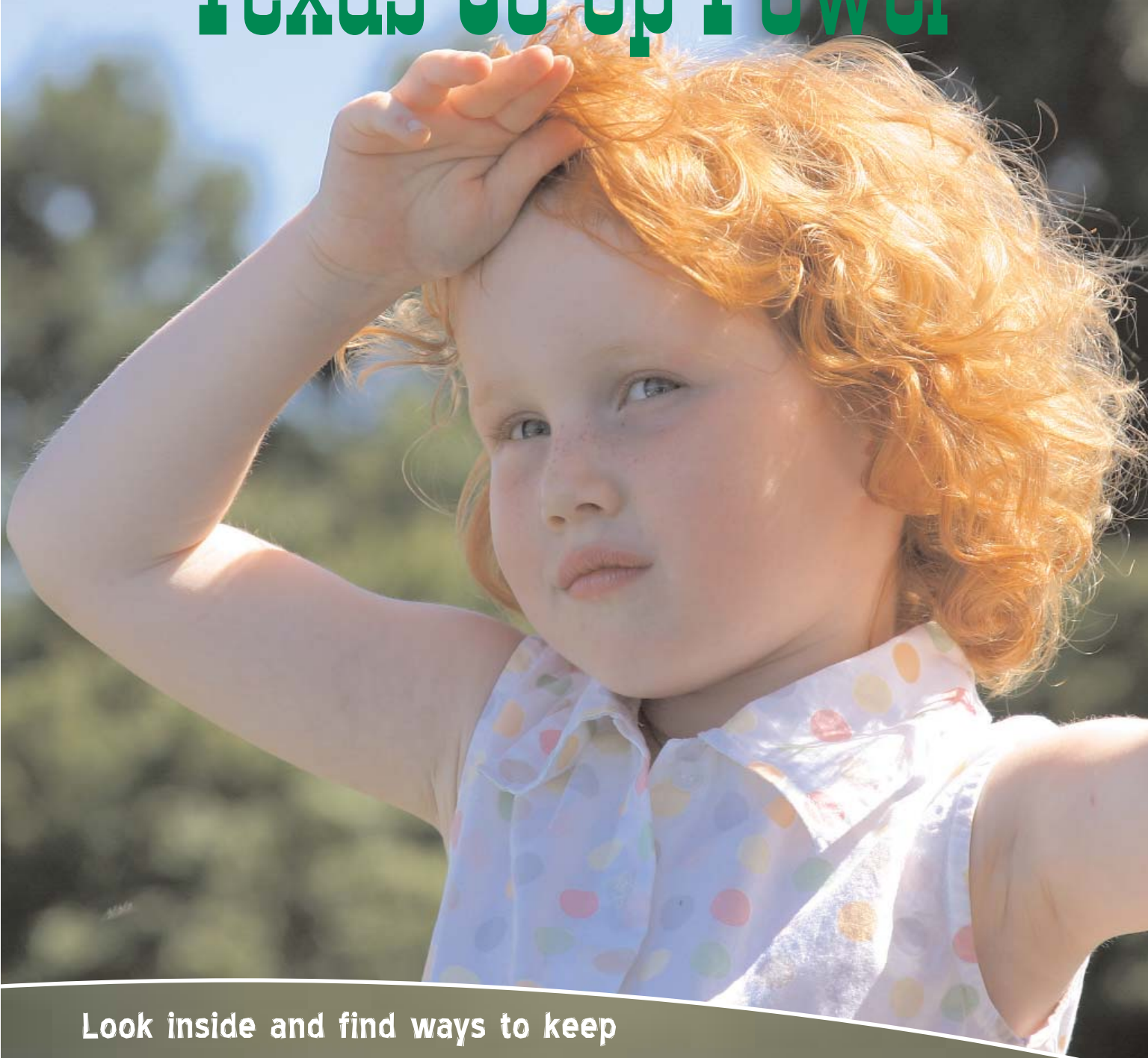




Texas Co-op Power



Look inside and find ways to keep cool and save money during the hot summer months.

Flip to the back cover and discover how you could win a \$300 home improvement gift card or one of 100 conservation gift packs.



Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



United's Top 10 Summer Conservation Tips

Ahh, the Texas summers. It's a great time to hang out with family and friends, attend baseball games and enjoy a hot dog cooked in your very own back yard! But when you kick back in your favorite recliner after a long, hot day, remember that same Texas heat can cause your electric bills to go up as you cool your house.

United offers members cost-saving tips to help control your cost this summer. Remember, you have control of your electric usage and at United, we're here to help you. We realize comfort is something we all depend on but sometimes, that comfort comes at a price. With our help, you can save a few dollars while at the same time, be comfy in your own home.

Energy conservation is easy to do and some of the same techniques you used in the winter actually work in the summer too. The best way to save a substantial amount of energy (and money) is to apply a few practical tips and make small investments in the summer that equate to true savings. According to your local energy experts, here are some of the most proven ways to control your energy usage:

1. Thermostat Setting

In the summer, the recommended setting is 78 degrees Fahrenheit. For each degree below this setting, energy consumption increases by about six to eight percent. Consider a programmable thermostat that raises the temperature by about five degrees when your home is unoccupied.

2. Ceiling Fans

Ceiling fans can effectively distribute cooling throughout your home by breaking up the cool and warm layers, making the overall room temperature uniform. Fans cost less to run and use less energy than central air conditioners. Also, use kitchen, bath and ventilating fans wisely; in just one hour, these fans can pull out a houseful of cooled air.

3. Keep Air Filters Clean

Check your filters every month. A filter clogged with dust and lint won't operate as efficiently. Plus, clogged filters are more likely to promote service problems with the unit. Remember, a dirty filter can cost you as much as 30 percent more on your electric bill.

4. Turn Off Unnecessary Lights

Lights should be turned off whenever an area is left unoccupied for any length of time. Check all outside lighting to make sure it is operating properly and does not stay on continuously. Make sure lights on timers are properly set to reflect seasonal variations in daylight.

5. Energy Efficient Lighting

Consider using 4-watt mini-fluorescent or electro-luminescent night lights. Both lights are much more efficient than their incandescent counterparts and the luminescent lights are cool to the touch. Also, compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) are four times more energy efficient than incandescent bulbs and provide the same lighting.

6. Seal Leaks

Seal off electric outlets and plates with foam or rubber gaskets or fiberglass insulation on exterior walls. Plug your home's air leaks by closing gaps around pipes, ducts, fans and vents that go through walls. Make sure there is full weather-stripping around doors, windows and the attic stairway opening. Use caulk to seal cracks around windows.

7. Hot Water

Anywhere from 14 to 20 percent of the total energy used in a home is used in heating water. Make sure your faucets don't leak and take showers instead of baths. Your main unit should be set at 120 to 125 degrees Fahrenheit. If your water heater is located in an unconditioned area, install an insulation blanket around it to cut energy for heating water by up to 10 percent.

8. Check Attic Ventilation and Insulation

Proper attic ventilation will help remove unwanted heat in the summer and unwanted moisture all year long. If your home is not insulated — or doesn't have the proper level of insulation — you can reduce the amount of energy needed to heat and cool your home by adding insulation. In Texas, attic insulation should be 12-14 inches thick with a recommend insulation value of R38 to R44.

9. Have Your HVAC Unit Professionally Checked

While you may have questions about your HVAC unit, take the time and call for a "tune-up" inspection and check with local HVAC dealers about pre-season specials. Call around to get bids and utilize referrals from friends and neighbors to get reliable input. You will find that a small investment at the beginning of the season might save you big dollars later.

10. Utilize United's Energy Calculator

The Home Energy Calculator on United's Web site (www.united-cs.com) allows users to enter information about their home and its appliances to determine an estimate of energy costs. This online resource can be very helpful as a part of your overall plan to save energy. United's Web site also is chock full of conservation and energy saving tips.

United will continue to explore and assist you with ways to improve the energy efficiency of your home. Even one improvement can provide significant savings each month. But don't stop here — United has several sources of information to help members and others conserve energy. Find out more by visiting or calling a local United office and by logging on to www.united-cs.com to begin conserving energy and lowering your electric bill.

Tools You Can Use — On the Web

The Internet has brought our members many new conveniences and tools, including ways to help evaluate energy usage, and United's Web site is no exception.

One of the best tools to use is the Home Energy Calculator, available at www.united-cs.com. This program allows members to enter information about their home and appliances to determine an estimate of total energy costs. It is a quick and easy energy-use interactive device that will demonstrate where energy is used in your homes and how much you can save by making simple changes in your home and lifestyle.

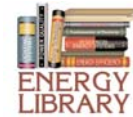
This online resource can also be very helpful as part of an overall energy plan when assessing and analyzing your best savings opportunities. United's energy calculator will provide estimates of energy usage costs based on your inputs. The annual and monthly results are approximations based on your data, United's rates and local weather patterns, but the calculator offers a great comparison platform to help determine what changes in your home could produce the most energy savings.



The Energy Library section of United's Web site is another very popular and useful source of tips and information for cooperative members interested in learning about conservation. Increasingly, residential customers surf our site looking for products, services and information about conserving power and energy efficiency — and this link offers several low-cost or no-cost ways to save money on your electric bill.

The Energy Library section features exhaustive coverage of home energy-use tips for both new construction and existing homeowners. Heat pumps, water heaters, kitchen appliances, doors, windows, insulation and even new technologies like cordless electric lawn-mowers are among the subjects covered.

Additionally, this link — which hundreds of fully illustrated pages — explains how to read your meter, perform a self energy audit and identify power quality problems. Plus, there is a link of Frequently Asked Questions with answers to more details about energy improvements. So go online now to discover the tools that help save money on your bill.



Learn About United's Free Energy Audits

United Cooperative Services performs free, on-site energy audits at the homes of many co-op members each year. Our experts make these inspections to (1) find any potential problems causing excessive energy usage, (2) educate members on electric usage/billing and (3) help member find areas for potential conservation.

In terms of conservation, United's experts discuss with members how lifestyle changes, home improvements and equipment or appliance upgrades can save a lot of money on your electric bill.

There are several key areas to address during an on-site energy audit. First, United's experts review the historical electric usage at the residence. They look for irregular usage or spikes in electric consumption and ask if anything has changed in the past year — like a new a/c unit, water heater, adding additional load or if more people are in the house than in the past — that could contribute to the usage.

The energy experts also take time to explain changes in power costs to the member. United's PCRf (Power Cost Recovery Factor) is a rate component that directly reflects the fluctuating cost of natural gas required to run an electric generation plant.

When natural gas prices rise, it cost more to produce electricity and this increase is passed through to United and its members by an increase in the PCRf. So while United's rate for the price of electricity has not changed, members will pay more to cover the cost of natural gas with an increased PCRf.

Also during an energy audit, members receive an analysis of the equipment and appliances within their home. The

base load (the usage not affected by weather) is calculated by totaling up all the appliances used on a monthly basis.

United's energy expert will also check the thermostat setting on water heater and make evaluations on the heating, cooling and ventilation equipment in the home by noting the type of equipment used, approximate cost per hour to operate, thermostat settings and cleanliness of filters.

Finally, the experts will check to see how the house is sealed by checking the condition, amount and type of insulation used, the attic ventilation and the condition and type of windows in the house. Areas for potential air infiltration will also be examined as the experts look for caulking, weather stripping and check the fireplace damper.

Several tools can be utilized during an energy audit but the two most commonly used are the amp meter and infrared thermometer. United's energy experts use the amp meter to check the amp draw of various appliances (mainly heating and cooling system) and to verify voltage.

With amperage and voltage, they can calculate the kWh used by the equipment/appliance. An infrared thermometer is used to check the return and supply air temperature of a home's heating and cooling system because temperature differential between return and supply air is an indicator of the unit's performance.

Following a completed energy audit, members receive an inventory of audit findings and also a checklist of recommendations that can be made to improve energy efficiency in the home. Member can also receive more information through one of our energy efficiency/conservation brochures or go to United's Web site for more tips and tools.

Go Online to Take United's New Conservation Quiz

www.united-cs.com

1. The **Energy Library** section of United's Web site allows members to go into three sections. Which of the following is not one your choices?
A. Existing Homes B. New Construction C. Renovated Homes D. Outdoor Living
2. On the **Conservation Tips** page, which two thermostat temperature settings should you remember?
A. 62 and 72 B. 68 and 78 C. 70 and 80 D. 72 and 82
3. On the **Conservation Tips** page, how often does it say you should clean or replace a typical air filter?
A. Once a week B. Once a month C. Once a quarter D. Once a year
4. The **Conservation Tips** page offers tips about new air conditioner. What does the acronym SEER stand for?
A. Standard Efficient Economical Radial B. Simple Easy Effective Ratchet
C. Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio D. Secondary Energy Evaporative Remote
5. The recommended thermostat setting for a residential water heater, according to the **Conservation Tips** page, is:
A. 150-160 degrees Fahrenheit B. 140-150 degrees Fahrenheit
C. 130-140 degrees Fahrenheit D. 120-125 degrees Fahrenheit
6. Using United's **Home Energy Calculator**, which is not one of the four options you can perform?
A. Calculate B. View Details C. View Chart D. Pay Your Bill
7. Using United's **Home Energy Calculator**, what is the default home square footage listed on the calculator when it first comes on the screen?
A. 1,500 B. 1,400 C. 1,300 D. 1,200
8. Under the **Energy Library**, what is the first FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) listed on the page?
A. What energy improvements are the best investments? B. How do you know if your home needs more insulation?
C. How do you insulate windows? D. What is the best way to locate air leaks in a home?
9. Under the **Energy Library** section of United's Web, what is the answer to Question 8 under the list of FAQ: "How much does it cost to light a typical home?"
A. 3 percent of the total energy usage B. 6 percent of the total energy usage
C. 34 percent of the total energy usage D. 46 percent of the total energy usage
10. For tips regarding New Construction under the **Energy Library** section of United's Web, there are four links for Energy Efficient Construction. Name these four links:
A. Benefits, Siting, Planning, Equipment B. Benefits, Siting, Power Quality, Fundamentals
C. Bill Info, Meters, Power Quality, Fundamentals D. Bill Info, Meters, Planning, Equipment

United offers many tips to keep cool, conserve energy and save money during the hot summer months.

Please take time to visit our Web site at www.united-cs.com and answer the questions to the quiz above. The first 100 members to complete the quiz will win a conservation gift pack and one member will win the grand prize — a \$300 home improvement gift card.