

Energy Savings Tips to Ignore

By David Holtzclaw of Transduction Technologies

The internet is full home energy savings tips, most coming from utility companies. Unfortunately, most are incorrect, half-truths, or a waste of time, and some can even harm you. Recent studies by the Energy Star Program (ESP), Dept. of Energy (DOE), Richard Diamond, Mithra Moezzi, and Michael Blasnik have debunked the following energy saving tips:

1. Cleaning the refrigerator coils improves refrigerator efficiency – several tests performed by the DOE showed little or no increase in refrigerator efficiency from cleaning the coils.
2. Programmable thermostats - the ESP stated "(ESP) has been unable to confirm an improvement in terms of energy savings delivered by programmable thermostats and has no credible basis for continuing to extend the current Energy Star specification."
3. Installing foam gaskets in electrical outlets, weather-stripping, and caulking – yes, this does save energy and money, but only about 3-5% of your total energy usage.
4. Closing your HVAC vents in unused rooms – not only does this not save energy, it actually wastes energy and can be dangerous as it creates more resistance for your air handler and leads to an unbalanced system.
5. Using ceiling fans to stay cool in the summer – Fans cool people, not rooms, by removing moisture from your skin. It can work if you decrease your air conditioner usage and turn off the fan as soon as you leave the room.
6. Annual furnace or air conditioner tune-ups – Michael Blasnik has shown that the standard "tune-up" service rarely saves energy or money. However it can increase the service life of your appliance. Next time request an ACCA Standard 5 HVAC Inspection. If your HVAC service contractor doesn't know what this is, find another service contractor.
7. Replace windows or place plastic over them – Replacing windows just for energy savings is almost never cost effective. Yes, properly applied plastic over leaky windows does work, but a better approach is to add either storm windows or Indow Windows (<http://www.indowwindows.com/>).

What does work (and is cost effective):

1. Air sealing your home along the attic plane (i.e. floor of the attic) and in the basement.
2. Switching to LED light bulbs or removing any incandescent light bulbs.
3. Air sealing and insulating your supply ducts, but not return ducts.
4. Adding attic insulation up to R-49 value **AFTER** you've air sealed your attic floor.
5. Insulating your basement or foundation walls.
6. Adding exterior wall insulation if you currently don't have any.
7. Insert a chimney balloon (<http://www.chimneyballoon.com/>) in unused fireplaces – just remember to take them out before using that fireplace!
8. Get a professional energy audit.