

# No-cost ways to save energy for renters & homeowners

Are you losing money because your  
home is wasting energy?

*These energy saving tips can help lower  
your utility bills.*



NC SUSTAINABLE  
ENERGY ASSOCIATION

# No-cost ways to save

## CHECK LIST:

- In the summer, use fans to help you feel cooler. Because fans cool people, not air, its benefits are only felt when someone is in the room, so turn fans off when no one is using the room.
- Close blinds and drapes during the summer to reduce heat gain, open curtains in the south-facing windows during daytime in winter to make the most of sunlight, and close at night to help keep out the cold.
- Ventilation fans are important for removing moisture in the bathroom and kitchen space, but only run them as long as necessary to remove moisture. Excess running will cause you to waste energy and lose conditioned air to the outdoors.
- Check your dryer vent to be sure it is clean and free of obstruction. This will save money, extend the life of your dryer, and may prevent a fire in your home.
- Air-dry your clothes when possible.



Clean your dryer lint filter with each load.

Wash your clothes in cold water when possible, and always run a full load.

Check your HVAC filters about once a month, and change them when dirty or according to manufacturer's instructions. When dirty, less air can pass through the filter so your unit has to work harder. That means your utility bill will increase and it will also likely mean your expensive HVAC system will need to be replaced sooner than a well-maintained unit.

Be sure furniture, rugs, and drapes are not blocking your air conditioning supply and return vents. Remove vent/register cover periodically when you vacuum and ensure the vent is not obstructed by pet hair or other unwanted debris.

Keep the thermostat fan switch in "auto" mode, not "on" mode. The "auto" setting allows your air conditioning to cycle off and on as needed rather than running constantly.



# In Your Home

Apart from the cost of heating and cooling your home, high energy use doesn't typically come from one single thing. Fortunately, there are many easy changes you can make that will not cost you anything and can add up to big savings.

## Thermostat

- The closer your indoor temperature is to outside air temperatures, the lower your bills will be. Recommended settings:
  - Summer: 78°F when home, ↑ 2-4°F when away
  - Winter: 68°F when home, ↓ 2-4°F when away
- Do not "crank up" the AC or heat, thinking that will get your home to a desired temperature more quickly. Your HVAC unit does not work like your car's gas peddle and this approach will likely increase your bill.
- For each degree you raise the temperature on your thermostat in summer and lower it in winter, you can reduce your costs by 3% - 6%.
- Before you leave your home for a long period of time, set the temperature a little higher (about 5 degrees above where you typically set it) and then return it to your normal temperature when you return.

## Refrigerator

- Set the right temperature, usually 35° to 38° F (follow manufacturer's guidelines).
- A full fridge/freezer keeps temperatures stable. Consider water jugs to fill empty shelves, but don't stuff the space completely because you want air to properly circulate.
- Seal cracks or air leaks in the door so cold air does not escape.

## Fireplace

Don't let money fly up your chimney! Close the fireplace damper if you're not using the fireplace.

## Refrigerator

Your refrigerator is a big energy user in your home. If you have an extra fridge or freezer, consider recycling it. Just think about how much money it is costing you to keep those extra sodas in the garage fridge.

## Water Heater

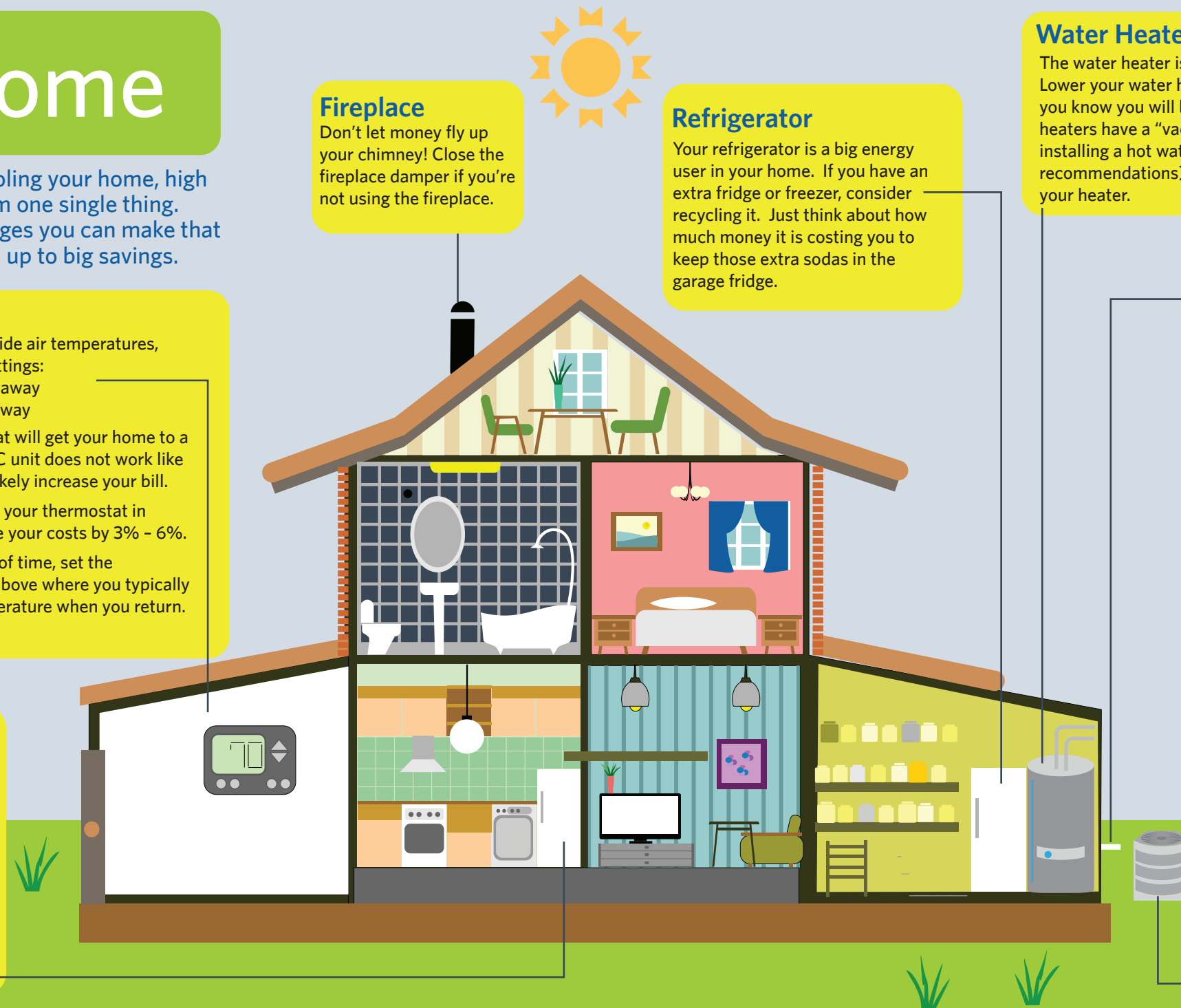
The water heater is typically the biggest energy-using appliance in a home. Lower your water heater temperature to 120°F, and lower it even more when you know you will be away for several days or longer. Many newer water heaters have a "vacation mode" that can save you money. Also consider installing a hot water insulation blanket (follow owner's manual recommendations) and insulate the first 10' of pipes carrying hot water from your heater.

## Condensate Line Maintenance

Most people think air conditioners just cool a home, but they also remove excess moisture from the air, making the home feel more comfortable. The captured moisture is removed through a condensate line that empties outdoors. Make sure that this line can drain freely. Blockage causes a backup of water in the system, which prevents the unit from dehumidifying the house and can even cause water overflow/damage.

## A note to homeowners about your HVAC system:

- Your HVAC system is likely one of the biggest investments you have made (or will need to make) in your home, and it is vital for cooling, heating, and conditioning your home's air, helping to prevent mold by removing excess moisture. Make certain your unit is in good working condition and have it inspected by a qualified technician annually.
- Be sure your outside unit is free of debris, shrubbery, and standing water.
- If your unit is located in a spot where it is subjected to hours of direct sunlight each day, consider providing shade by using a trellis or planting trees or shrubs that will block the sun. Make sure the trellis or plantings are at least 2 feet from the unit so air can circulate around the unit.





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### Resources

*Do-It-Yourself Home Assessment. Home Energy Conservation at North Carolina:*

<http://energy.ces.ncsu.edu/2014/04/do-it-yourself-with-a-little-help-from-nc-cooperative-extensions-e-conservation-program-interview-by-rod-bain-usda-plus-resources/>

*Making Sense (and Cents) out of Home Energy Efficiency Projects:*

<http://energy.ces.ncsu.edu/making-sense-and-cents-out-of-home-energy-efficiency-projects/>

*Keeping Cool and Saving Money. E-Conservation*

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/HEMS-Keeping-Cool.pdf>