



COOLING & HEATING



LCEC recommends installing a programmable thermostat that will automatically raise and lower the temperature at certain times of the day. Programmable thermostats can save up to 28 percent in cooling costs. LCEC recommends setting the thermostat at 83 degrees if you are away from your home more than two hours and at 78 degrees while you are home. Each degree below the recommended temperature of 78 degrees adds eight percent to cooling costs.

COOLING

Southwest Florida's steamy subtropical summers cause the nation's highest average annual air conditioning use. In fact, air conditioning accounts for approximately half of most average monthly utility bills. Efficient, functional air conditioning equipment and effective air conditioner management are absolute necessities for the cost-conscious household.

Residential air conditioning systems in Southwest Florida have a life expectancy of about 15 years. As your air conditioning system approaches its 15th birthday, you should be less willing to spend large amounts on maintenance and repair and more willing to investigate replacement with new, more efficient equipment. It is usually in the best interests of the homeowner to continue to operate the existing air conditioning system unless faced with significant repair costs. LCEC offers a free Energy Survey of your home to help you evaluate your needs and determine the most cost-effective course of action.

What is SEER?

The size of the air conditioner is referred to as its tonnage. The efficiency of most air conditioning systems is expressed as a SEER rating (Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio). Like the MPG rating of an automobile, the SEER rating of an air conditioner indicates the operating cost of the unit. The higher the SEER rating is, the lower operating costs will be. Although modern air conditioning equipment is available at SEER ratings of 15 or higher, the consumer should carefully evaluate their historic cooling cost before purchasing the ultra-high SEER equipment.

HEATING

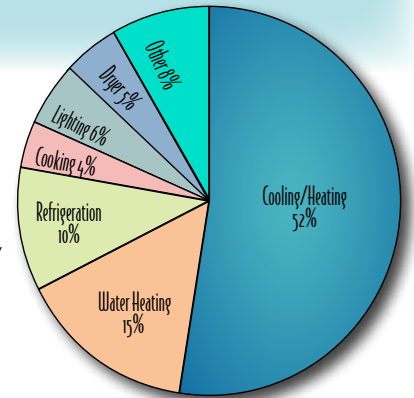
Heating is the most intense use of electric energy in the average home and is the most expensive electric appliance.

Since heating can cost two to three times more than cooling, save by using heating

More tips from our experts

Replace or clean return filters monthly. Clogged filters increase operating costs and can cause damage to expensive air conditioner equipment. Do not close interior doors or duct outlets in an effort to maintain different temperatures in different rooms. This will unbalance the system, reduce its efficiency and may damage the duct system. Do not operate the air conditioner fan in the "on" position. The "auto" fan setting produces the most economical performance and the best humidity control. Service air conditioning systems annually. Use bath and kitchen exhaust fans sparingly when air conditioner is in use.

Chart is based on annual energy use in Southwest Florida. During summer months, cooling costs will be 50-60 percent of your energy bill.



blankets or small portable space heaters to heat only the rooms that you are occupying. LCEC recommends setting the thermostat between 65 and 68 degrees Fahrenheit when heating the home.

SEER	Estimated air conditioning kilowatt usage (for each hour of operation)							
	1.5 TON	2 TON	2.5 TON	3 TON	3.5 TON	4 TON	4.5 TON	5 TON
10	1.80	2.40	*3.00	3.60	4.20	4.80	5.40	6.00
11	1.64	2.18	2.73	3.27	3.82	4.36	4.91	5.46
12	1.50	2.00	2.50	3.00	3.50	4.00	4.50	5.00
13	1.38	1.85	2.30	2.77	3.23	3.69	4.15	4.60
14	1.29	1.71	2.14	2.57	3.00	3.43	3.85	4.28
15	1.20	1.60	2.00	2.40	2.80	3.20	3.60	4.00
16	1.11	1.51	1.91	2.31	2.71	3.11	3.51	3.82
17	1.02	1.42	1.82	2.22	2.62	3.02	3.42	3.82

*Example: 2.5 ton system @ 10 SEER 3 kilowatts X 10 hours per day x 30 days a month = 900 kWh. Above measurements indicate kW demand. For 5 ton calculations, double 2.5 ton figures.

Heat pumps are more expensive than straight-cool air conditioners with electric resistance heat (electric heat strips). According to local air conditioning contractors, the price varies depending on the size and unit efficiency. Many families in Southwest Florida use their heat too sparingly to justify the cost of a heat pump. Occasionally, medical conditions require that very constant indoor temperatures be maintained. In these cases, a heat pump would be a wise investment. As a rule of thumb, a heat pump should be purchased if power usage of at least three winter heating months is equal to or greater than power usage in the three highest summer months.

	Watts of heat strip	kWh per hour
Estimated Heat Strip Usage	1,500 watts	1.5 kWh
	7,500 watts	7.5 kWh
	* 10,000 watts	10 kWh
	15,000 watts	15 kWh

Multiply kWh per mo. by current rate
* Example: 10 kWh x 3 hr/day x 30 days = 900 kWh/mo.