

## EnergyWise<sup>SM</sup> Tip: Ceiling Fans

How much electricity can you save by using ceiling fans to keep cool this year? That depends on how you use them. In fact, if you do not use them wisely, you may end up using more energy overall!

Ceiling fans can “help” save money on air conditioning bills. They do this in two ways: First, during the spring and fall when it is not too hot outside, you can sometimes use the fans to keep comfortable instead of turning on the air conditioning system. Since fans use on average 60 to 100 watts of energy and the average air conditioning system uses 3,500 watts, you can save a few dollars.

The second way to save is to use the fans during very hot weather. Since a fan blowing air on you can help you feel comfortable even at higher ambient air temperatures that would normally have you scurrying to find relief from the heat, you can set your home’s air conditioner’s thermostat to a higher temperature and feel comfortable.

Unfortunately, most people do not use their ceiling fans in a way that actually saves them money. A recent study in Florida found that there was no difference in thermostat settings for people using fans versus those not using fans. If you do not turn up the thermostat, then the air conditioning will run just as much, and you will not save a dime. In fact, your bill will rise, since the fan uses energy too!

If you want to save money by using fans, the key thing to remember is that fans cool people. They do not cool air. They do not cool rooms. They do cool people. So run the fans only when there are people in the room.

To be economical, you have to think of the fans like you think of lights. You go into a room, you turn on the light (fan). You leave the room, you turn it off. Blowing air onto your living room carpet or onto your bed, when no people are there, will cool nothing except dust mites.

In summer months, your ceiling fan offers the greatest energy saving benefit when run in a counter-clockwise direction. If the outside temperature is not too high, you might be able to achieve a comfortable environment by turning off the HVAC altogether, by opening a few windows and allowing the ceiling fan to circulate warm air outdoors. Effective circulation can make you feel up to 8 degrees F. cooler and reduce air conditioning bills by up to 40 percent, though most people see an average decrease of 15 percent energy use when effectively managing their cooling.

For maximum energy saving benefits, you might consider an ENERGY STAR<sup>®</sup> ceiling fan. These fans circulate an average of 15 percent more air than other ceiling fans, without sacrificing style or attractiveness. To reap the optimal energy saving benefits from your ceiling fans, it is important to install several fans throughout your home and office, placed in key locations. All of the most frequently used rooms should have a ceiling fans. For optimal performance, the blades of your ceiling fan should be between 7-9 feet above the floor, and 10-12 inches below the ceiling. If the blades of your fan are too close to the ceiling, your fan may be up to 40 percent less efficient. Finally, the blades should be at least 18 inches from the nearest wall.

The fan hanging from the ceiling in your living room may seem like it was put there for decoration, but this simple device can help control your home cooling costs. Using a multi-speed reversible ceiling fan could save you significant money, but only if and when it is used correctly.