ABOUT YOUR APARTMENT

AE8

Energy- and Water-Saving Tips for Your Apartment

Rising energy costs and growing concerns about greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, air pollution and the security of our future supplies of natural gas and electricity make energy efficiency a concern for all Canadians. This is true whether you rent or own your unit and whether you pay your utilities directly or through your rent or condominium fees.

This About Your Apartment has energy- and water-saving tips that can save you money and make your apartment more comfortable. It lists things you can do yourself (identified by "DIY") and things you can do in co-operation with your building's management. Some are simple and low cost; others may mean hiring a contractor (identified by "Contractor"). You can buy most of the materials and tools at any hardware store.

In many cases, water-conserving measures reduce water consumption in apartment buildings and also

COMMON ENERGY-And Water-Wasting Problems

Air leakage

Cracks and holes in walls, ceilings, floors, windows and doors permit drafts to enter. A drafty apartment is cold and uncomfortable in the winter and hot and humid in the summer. Drafty apartments require more heating during the winter and more cooling during the summer to make them comfortable—making them more expensive to live in. Drafty apartments also tend to suffer from outside noise problems.

Air leakage is not just an exterior wall problem. Holes and cracks in the interior partition walls, ceilings and floors of your apartment allow air to flow between your apartment, your neighbours' apartments and the corridor.

Even very small gaps allow odours, tobacco smoke, noise and pests to move between units and also allow heated (or cooled) air to move in an uncontrolled way and eventually escape the building.

For these reasons, follow the tips provided throughout this fact sheet to seal cracks and holes in both interior and exterior wall, floor and ceiling locations. Reducing air leakage also helps you achieve more comfortable air temperature and humidity in your apartment.

Poor maintenance of systems

Well-maintained heating, ventilating and air-conditioning systems not only use less energy—they keep you more comfortable and need less service and fewer repairs. As described in this *About Your Apartment*, you can take steps to keep them operating efficiently.





decrease energy use for pumping and water heating. Reducing energy and water use reduces your utility bills if you pay them directly. If your utilities are included in your rent or condo fees, these tips will help to control rent and condo fee increases. As well, most of the energy-saving tips result in more comfortable, healthier apartment living.

These tips do not distinguish between renters and condominium owners, nor do they give advice on who should pay for improvements, or say who will benefit from them. These are important issues but they have to be thought through for each building. These tips are limited to identifying the full range of possibilities available to reduce energy and water consumption. It is recommended that you consult with your building manager on any maintenance, repairs or improvements you may wish to undertake to your unit.

WINDOWS AND DOORS

Use free heat from the sun

On sunny winter days, take advantage of the sun's heat.

Open the curtains and blinds on south-, west- and eastfacing windows to warm your apartment. If necessary, close radiator valves, turn down thermostats to keep rooms from getting too hot—remember to reset the thermostat when the sun is no longer shining into the room. Close your curtains and blinds at night to help keep the heat in your apartment.

Warning: Closing curtains and blinds may cause condensation (water) to form on windows. The condensation may wet and damage window frames and surrounding surfaces. This, in turn, can allow mold to grow and, if unchecked, can threaten occupant health. If condensation forms on windows, wipe up any water as soon as possible and do not keep curtains closed for extended periods. Try running your bathroom and kitchen fans longer. Do not close curtains if condensation becomes a persistent problem.

Keep the heat in during the winter

Avoid opening your windows if it gets too hot in your apartment in the winter. This wastes energy and money. When you open a window, you lose the heat you have already paid for and you make the heating system work harder to heat the room. If it's too hot, turn down the thermostat.

If overheating from the sun seems to be the problem, use your drapes and blinds to shade the affected rooms. If your building is heated with a central boiler, tell your building management that your apartment is too warm. The management may be able to adjust the boiler controls to make your apartment more comfortable or provide information on adjusting the heating system to reduce the heat.

Keep the heat out during the summer

In the summer, keep the heat out of your apartment during the day by keeping the curtains and blinds closed. It's even helpful to keep the windows themselves closed to keep hot humid air from blowing into your apartment. In the evening, night and early morning, open windows to allow cooler air in.

Do not leave windows open if security is a concern.

Reduce air leakage Window and door joints: DIY

 Caulk open joints between window and door frames and trim and adjacent walls.

Window and door weatherstripping gaskets: DIY

Ensure that window and door weatherstripping gaskets are intact and in good condition. If they are not, replace them. Worn or flattened gaskets, windows that rattle in the wind, drafts and moving drapes or blinds are good indicators of leaky windows and doors. Always consult with your building management and obtain approval before you proceed with air-sealing work. Use paintable latex caulking when caulking painted surfaces. This will allow you to hide the caulk joint with paint, if necessary. Be careful when using spray foam—some foams expand rapidly and can damage adjacent surfaces and make a mess.

FLOORS AND WALLS

Reduce air leakage

Floor-wall baseboard joints: DIY/Contractor

■ Caulk visible cracks along the exterior wall-floor joints. This is only possible where the baseboard trim, or wall, can be caulked to a rigid floor surface, such as concrete, tile or wood. Although somewhat difficult to do, it may be more worthwhile to do this during renovations—especially if baseboard or quarter-round trim is to be removed and replaced. In this case, caulking can be applied between the wall surface and floor and would then be covered by the baseboard. If caulking the joint between the baseboard or quarterround trim and the floor, first apply a strip of masking tape on the floor about 3 mm (% in.) from the wall along the wall-floor joint to be caulked. Remove the tape when you have finished

applying the caulking. This will help to produce a clean caulked joint.

Electric wire penetrations: DIY/Contractor

- Seal wiring penetrations behind electric baseboard heaters. You will need a contractor to disconnect the power and temporarily remove the baseboard heating units. Often, the electric wire serving the heater is run through a rough hole in the exterior wall. The hole can be foamed, or caulked, depending on its size.
- Take this opportunity to clean any dust or debris from behind the baseboard and to vacuum the baseboard heating elements to improve heat transfer.

Electric switch and outlet cover plates: DIY

- Shut off electricity at your electrical panel to all outlets you plan to work on. Install CSAapproved air-sealing gaskets behind the cover plates of light switches and electrical outlets particularly those on exterior walls. Made specifically for use under electric cover plates, these foam gaskets are available at most hardware stores.
- Insert child safety plugs into electric outlets to stop drafts through the holes in outlets. The foam knockouts from the outlet

foam gaskets can be inserted over the safety plug prongs to provide a better seal.

Pipes, wires and ducts: DIY

- Caulk and seal around pipes in the walls and floor, under sinks in the kitchen and bathrooms and behind toilet fixtures.
- Seal around pipe, duct and wiring penetrations in utility closets and other common area spaces.
- Seal these areas with caulking or spray-in foam. Fibreglass insulation, tape, rags and other porous materials are not effective.

Exterior vent and conduit penetrations: DIY/Contractor

- Caulk openings around exhaustand supply-air grills, electric boxes (outside lights and plugs on balconies and so on) and plumbing penetrations that are accessible from your balcony area.
- Check to ensure that hinged dampers within exterior vent hoods close completely when the exhaust fan is off.

For safety, do not attempt to work on areas that are not easily accessible from your balcony or that are too high to reach safely.

BATHROOM AND Kitchen

Make sure exhaust fans are working efficiently

- Clean the housing and grill covering of bathroom fans and range hoods and the range hood filters. Where accessible, make sure the fan blades are also clean and dust free. If your exhaust fans duct directly through the exterior wall of your apartment (rather than through a rooftop fan) and you can easily see and safely access it from your balcony, ensure that the exterior hoods are clear and the dampers close fully when the fans are off and open fully when the fans are running. If a damper does not move freely, it may restrict airflow, causing the fan to run longer and use more energy to properly ventilate the bathroom or kitchen. Contact your building manager if repairs are required. A clean and properly functioning ventilation system will do its job more efficiently.
- Use a timer for the bathroom exhaust fan to ensure that the fan runs long enough to remove moisture and odours but is not left on to needlessly exhaust heated indoor air. The timer should be installed by a contractor.

Reduce air leakage

Bathroom and exhaust fans: DIY

■ For an exhaust fan in the bathroom, remove the ceiling grill and caulk or seal the gap between the fan and surrounding ceiling area with foil duct tape. The sealed joint will be hidden when you replace the grill. If you have an exhaust grill connected to a central exhaust system in your bathroom, it may be possible to remove the grill and seal the exhaust duct to the surrounding wall. Otherwise, seal the gap between the grill and the wall with paintable caulking.

Bathtub surrounds: DIY

 Caulk a bathtub and its surrounding enclosure to adjacent wall and ceiling areas with paintable, mold-resistant caulking.

Remember, if you are renting, get permission from the building management or owner before carrying out any of these measures.

Fix leaky faucets and toilets

Leaky faucets waste water. If your faucet drips at a rate of one drop per second, you can expect to waste up to 200 L (44 gal.) of water per week.

A leaky faucet is easy to spot, but a leaky toilet can be more difficult to identify. One way to spot a problem is to place a few drops of food colouring in the water storage tank.

Let the toilet sit for at least half an hour and then check the colour of the water in the bowl. If the water in your bowl has become tinted with the colour, the toilet's flapper valve may need to be replaced. Make sure you flush the coloured water down the drain to avoid colouring your tank and bowl.

If you have a leaky faucet or toilet, you may be able to repair it yourself by purchasing a replacement flapper that is compatible with the make and model of your toilet. Don't substitute with noncompatible flappers as they may leak. Alternatively, you can hire a plumber or ask your building manager to make the repair.

Install low-flow shower heads and other water-conserving devices

Low-flow showerheads (9.5 L/minute [2 gal.] or less) and faucet aerators reduce the amount of water flowing through these fixtures while maintaining acceptable water pressure. Users feel that they are receiving the same amount of water while the devices actually conserve water and save money. On-Off valves can also be installed at the shower head to allow you to easily shut off the water while you are using soap or shampoo. This saves water, energy and soap. In some cases, a knowledgeable do-ityourselfer can install these devices. Not only do these devices save water, they save energy when they help reduce the amount of hot water you use.

Install low-flush toilets

Toilets are the biggest water user in an apartment, especially toilets that are more than a decade old. Most of these older toilets use between 20 and 26 L (4 ½ and 5 ¾ gal.) per flush while most modern toilets use six litres (1 ½ gal.) per flush to effectively do the same job.

Consider installing a low-flush model (6 L) when replacing your toilet or upgrading your bathroom. Better yet, install a dual-flush toilet—one that flushes a very small amount of water for liquid waste or the full 6 L for solid waste. The performance of 6 L and dual flush toilets has greatly improved and the flush can be superior to older models.

There is information on flush performance of many 6 L and dual flush toilets on the Canadian Water and Wastewater Association's website at www.cwwa.ca (retrieved August 2008).

LIGHTING

Use energy-efficient lighting

Fluorescent tubes and energy-efficient compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) provide high-quality, energy-efficient lighting. Fluorescent lamps are 75 to 80 per cent more efficient than incandescent bulbs and last six to 10 times longer. CFLs are available in a range of lighting levels and colours and some are manufactured in the same size and shape as traditional incandescent

bulbs. Use these in fixtures throughout your apartment.

Although fluorescent and compact fluorescent lamps are more expensive than regular incandescent bulbs, they save energy and money over their much longer lifetime.

Look for the ENERGY STAR® label when purchasing these products. Make sure you dispose of fluorescent lighting products properly as the tubes contain mercury—contact your building management and local municipality for disposal instructions.

APPLIANCES

Use energy-efficient appliances

Appliances account for about 20 per cent of your household energy consumption, with refrigerators and clothes dryers at the top of the consumption list. When replacing or purchasing new appliances or electronic equipment, consider energy consumption along with the purchase price and other features you are looking for. Check the EnerGuide labelling on large appliances and the ENERGY STAR® ratings for electronics, office products and small appliances. These labels provide information on the amount of energy consumed by the device while it is in use.

When purchasing a new clothes washing machine, consider a front-loading type. They use up to 40 per cent less water and 60 per cent less

energy than top-loading machines. They also use less detergent. Front loading washing machines are able to remove more water from the laundry, which reduces the amount of time your clothes have to stay in the dryer, which further reduces your energy use.

Keep your refrigerator in good condition

Older refrigerators can use more energy than necessary if they are not looked after.

- Clean the evaporator coils on the back of, or under, the refrigerator once a year if accessible. Refer to your refrigerator owner's manual for cleaning information.
- Ensure that the door gasket fits properly and the door closes firmly against the gasket. Clean the gasket with soap and water and if it is damaged, replace it.
- Let food cool before storing it in the refrigerator.
- Avoid opening the door for prolonged periods and ensure that the door is properly closed when finished.
- Defrost freezers regularly to keep them working their best and don't let freezers build up more than 6 mm—about ¼ in.—of frost.

Use your clothes washer and dryer efficiently

1—Reduce the number of loads

This can be done by filling the washer to save both energy and water. Sort and organize your laundry into full loads. Avoid overloading the washer and dryer—your clothes may not get fully clean and will take longer to dry. Refer to the washing instructions on the clothing labels or washing machine.

2—Use cold water for clothes washing

There are detergents formulated specifically for cold water use. Only use hot water for very dirty clothes. If hot water washing is required, sort the laundry to separate clothes into hot water and cold water loads to reduce hot water energy use.

3—Group similar fabric types together before drying them

For example, dry permanent press shirts in one load using a lower dryer temperature. See the owner's manual for your dryer for more information.

4—Air-dry outdoors

Save electricity when drying clothes by using a drying rack on your balcony to air-dry clothes. Air drying clothes indoors is not recommended, as this may cause moisture problems.

5—Keep your clothes dryer lint-free

Clean the lint from the dryer's filter after every load. There may be another lint trap located along the dryer duct that may have to be cleaned as well. Lint-clogged filters increase clothes drying times and energy use and can be a serious fire hazard.

Increased drying times also increase your air-conditioning requirements in the summer—resulting in higher electricity use. If your dryer vent hood is visible and accessible from your balcony, check to make sure the vent damper is lint-free and opens and shuts easily when the dryer is turned on and off. If the vent hood is clogged with lint, this could be a sign your dryer's ducts need to be cleaned by a duct-cleaning contractor.

HEATING SYSTEM

Clean and service your heating system

Fan-coil units: DIY/Contractor

Keep fan-coil filters clean, otherwise your system will have to work harder and use more energy to provide comfort in your apartment.

 Change or clean filters every one to three months—depending on the type installed and how quickly they get dirty.

- Vacuum the supply- and returnair grills to remove dust build up. If the grills have adjustable louvres, make sure they are open.
- Have the coils in the fan-coil unit cleaned and vacuumed annually (don't do it yourself—the coils are easy to damage).
- Repair water leaks or noisy fan motors.

Hot water/steam radiators and convectors: DIY

- Vacuum around and behind radiators several times a year.
 If possible, remove the radiator cover and gently vacuum the coils or heating elements.
- Avoid placing furniture and heavy drapes where they block the movement of room air around the radiators.
- If your system has thermostatic zone valves to control the heat output from the radiators, confirm that the system works properly by resetting the thermostat and observing changes in the temperature of the radiator. If, over the course of an hour, no changes are noted, consult with the building management.

Furnaces: DIY/Contractor

 Change or clean furnace filters every one to three months (depending on the type installed and how quickly they get dirty).

- Vacuum the supply- and returnair grills to remove dust build up. If the grills have adjustable louvres, make sure they are open.
- Report noisy fan motors to the building management or contact a service contractor.
- Have the furnace serviced. This should be done every year to ensure that they are in good working order.

Electric baseboards: DIY

- Ensure that room air can move freely around all electric baseboard units and that curtains or furniture do not block them.
- Clean electric baseboard heaters at least once a year. Deactivate the heater by switching off the electricity at the circuit breaker in your apartment's electrical panel. If possible, remove the cover panels to access and clean the fins. Vacuum around and in the baseboard unit to remove dust build up. Be careful not to damage the electrical element or fins. Replace the panel. Reactivate the electricity to the heater.
- Ensure the thermostat works by setting it high and then low and listen for a click. The baseboard unit should warm up and cool down depending on the setting of the thermostat. If there are no changes contact the building management or a service contractor.

Set your thermostat back

Lowering your thermostat can lower your heating bill. During the winter, set the thermostat at 22°C (72°F) or less when people are home. Many people find 20°C (68°F) quite comfortable.

During the heating season, set your heating system to a lower temperature for overnight or when you are away. Some people turn their thermostats down to 15.5°C (60°F) or 13°C (55°F) at night and when they're away during the day.

For your comfort and convenience, a programmable thermostat can be used for many types of heating and cooling equipment to automatically turn up the heat before you get up each morning or return from work. These thermostats automatically lower and raise the temperature at preset times during the day and week. However, programmable thermostats only save energy if they are used—become familiar with how to set your thermostat to get the most cost savings from it. See CMHC's About Your House fact sheet Setback Thermostats.

The extent to which you can safely set back your thermostat depends on the number of people in the apartment, how much moisture you produce from bathing, showering, laundry and cooking, your use of bathroom fans and the kitchen range hood to control moisture, and the window and wall insulation values. Making good use of your bathroom

fans and range hood helps to prevent condensation and maximize how far you can set back the thermostat.

Warning: One note of caution before you turn down the heat. As you reduce the temperature in your apartment, you may find more condensation (the appearance of water) on your windows. Prolonged condensation can lead to water pooling on windowsills and forming in concealed spaces within the exterior walls or roof spaces—particularly if you close drapes and blinds at night. This, in turn, can damage surfaces, finishes, carpets, draperies and lead to mold growth. If you set back your thermostat, closely monitor your windows and other exterior wall surfaces for condensation. Ensure that mold does not develop by wiping up water as it forms and increasing your setback temperature setting to warmer levels.

AIR-CONDITIONING SYSTEM

Buy an energy-efficient air conditioner

Air conditioners use energy to cool your apartment and reduce humidity levels. A correctly sized, energy-efficient model saves energy and money. Air conditioners have an energy efficiency rating—EER for short. Buy an air conditioner

with an EER of at least 11 and an ENERGY STAR® symbol on the product. Although they usually cost a little more, you will use less electricity. Higher-efficiency air conditioners are usually higher quality, less noisy and better performing.

Ensure the air conditioner has the correct amount of cooling for your apartment. An air conditioner with too much cooling capacity will not operate efficiently, can cause your apartment to feel cold and humid, will use more energy and will cost more to operate. For air conditioners, smaller is always better as it will run more efficiently and provide superior temperature and humidity control.

Use your air conditioner efficiently

Some apartments are cooled by central air-conditioning systems, while others rely on window-mount units or more permanent throughwall systems. Regardless of the type of air conditioner installed, the following guidelines will help reduce air-conditioning electricity use.

■ Set your thermostat higher or deactivate the air-conditioning system when you are out.

Remove and clean the window air conditioner filters every month.

If there is a "fresh air" vent on the window-mount or through-wall air conditioner, make sure that it is closed so you're not cooling outside air. If your apartment

- becomes stuffy, open the vent while you are in the apartment.
- If possible, install window air conditioners in north-facing or shaded windows. Shading helps to improve air conditioner efficiency and reduce energy use.
- Keep windows, curtains and blinds closed to keep out heat and humidity.
- Install ceiling fans and use them to supplement air conditioners or as an alternative to air conditioning. ENERGY STAR®rated ceiling fans generally use very little electricity.
- For window-mount air conditioners, remove and store the air conditioner during the winter to help reduce spaceheating energy use. Replace the window pane or install and seal an insulated panel in place of the air conditioner.

Reduce air leakage

Window and through-wall air-conditioning units: DIY/Contractors

■ Seal joints around through-wall or window-mount air-conditioning units. Use caulking or spray-in foam. If the joint is wider than 3 mm (⅓ in.), a foam backer-rod may be inserted in the joint first to prevent the caulking from flowing into the joint. Be careful not to block pipes or openings intended to drain condensation from the air conditioner outdoors.

Apply plastic sheets over top of the through-wall or window air-conditioning units in the winter to stop drafts through the units themselves. Be careful to use a removable tape. Try to find a surrounding surface to tape the plastic sheet to that will not be damaged when the tape is removed in the spring.

WATER HEATERS

Turn down the water tank temperature

If you have a gas- or oil-fired hot water tank in your apartment, adjust the temperature to deliver hot water at each faucet that is between 46°C (115°F) and 49°C (120°F).

Electric hot water tanks should not be set below 60°C (140°F). However, thermostatic mixing valves are recommended to ensure water temperature delivered to faucets, tubs and showers does not exceed 49°C (120°F) as scalding can result.

Add an insulated cover over the hot water tank to keep the water warm. You can do this yourself if you have an electric tank. A qualified contractor should handle gas- and oil-fired tanks.

If your hot water is provided by a central system and it's hotter than 49°C (120°F), ask your building manager if the temperature can be safely reduced.

Turn your water heater down when you're away

If you have a hot water tank in your apartment, turn the water heater down or off when you plan to be away for more than a few days. There's no need to reheat the same water over and over again if it is not going to be used. When you return, the water heater will heat the water in the tank in a few hours.

CHANGE YOUR HABITS

Turn down the heat before a party

People generate heat. Before people arrive for a party, turn down your thermostat and save some energy. Use the heat given off by the party guests to help keep your apartment warm instead of opening a window to cool down the apartment once they arrive. Turn the thermostat back up when they leave.

Turn off lights, electronics and appliances

Turn off lights, appliances and electrical equipment when you're not using them to save energy. Note that many of today's electronic products incorporate an "instant on" feature and use electricity whether they are "turned on" or not.

Most televisions, for example, constantly draw a small amount of power so they turn on instantly. Any household appliance with a clock, timer, memory, remote control power switch or a transformer is drawing power even if it's turned

off. The energy consumed when these devices are off is called a "phantom load." Although each device consumes only a small amount of electricity to be at the ready, the amount of phantom load in an apartment building can be significant when all such loads are added up.

Use power bars to power clusters of electronics such as audio systems, video systems and computers and computer peripherals. This lets you deactivate all of the equipment with one flick of a switch and reduce phantom electricity use.

Use your appliances efficiently

When cooking, use pot lids to keep the heat in the pot and use lower heat settings. This reduces cookingrelated energy use and helps reduce air-conditioning energy use in the summer (while keeping your apartment more comfortable).

Use full loads in the clothes washer and dishwasher. You will save water and energy if you wait until your dishwasher is full (but not overfilled) and you have a full load of laundry to do before doing the washing. If you only run your dishwasher when it is full, it takes less water and energy to wash the dishes than if you do them by hand. Scrape dirty dishes and store them in the dishwasher until you have a full load. You can save more energy by using the energy-efficient drying cycle on the dishwasher and letting the dishes air-dry.

Take the stairs

If you live near the ground floor, consider taking the stairs. It reduces elevator energy consumption and gets you in shape.

OTHER THINGS YOU Can do

Report energy hogs

If you notice equipment or systems that do not seem to be running properly, report them to the building management for repairs. Also report exterior doors and windows with worn or missing weatherstripping, overheated parking garages and other common rooms and areas, and unnecessary 24-hour lighting.

Use a timer on your block heater

Block heaters only need to heat your car's engine block for an hour or so before you drive to be effective. Plugging your car into a timer set to start the block heater an hour before your departure you can save a significant amount of energy.

Organize a car pool

While this does not save building energy, it reduces transportation energy required to move you, and your neighbours, from your building to work or other destinations.

Encourage and support cycling

Cycling also saves on transportation-related energy use. By getting the building management to providing well-lit, accessible and safe storage areas for bicycles, you can get more people to consider cycling as a healthy alternative to the daily commute.

Explore opportunities for alternative landscaping

Alternative landscaping replaces water-intensive grass areas with community gardens and trees to help provide natural shading. This helps to control local outdoor air temperatures—a green space is always cooler than a parking lot. Look for opportunities to catch and retain rainwater for community gardens to save on the use of treated municipal water.

Organize a building environmental committee

Bring together others who share your enthusiasm for saving energy and money. An environment committee can be a powerful way to help identify energy and water savings in the building and to start other environmental initiatives such as recycling, composting and

waste management. Environment committees can help building management in its efforts to keep the building running efficiently.

To find more About Your Apartment fact sheets plus a wide variety of information products, visit our website at www.cmhc.ca. You can also reach us by telephone at 1-800-668-2642 or by fax at 1-800-245-9274.

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