



West Valley VIEW

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Green ways to save greenbacks *APS shares ways to save energy, money*

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Opening your electric bill during Arizona's hottest months can cause quite a jolt.

Cooling and heating a home represents nearly half of the cost incurred by the average Arizona Public Service Co. customer throughout the year.

So how can people bring down their electric bills and save some energy? Tom Hines, residential efficiency program manager for APS, spoke at Estrella Mountain Community College in Avondale last week, sharing many tips.

"You can't tell how to save energy until you figure out where you use energy," Hines said. "It starts with each individual taking some kind of action."

Keeping a home cool without breaking the bank is the challenge Valley families face for about five months out of the year.

"Your air conditioning in the summer here is like taking your car across the country - it's a long haul," Hines said.

Homeowners should consider taking steps to ensure their air conditioners are working properly and make sure they don't have duct leaks. Taking certain steps to make your home more energy efficient qualifies residents for rebates from APS, as well.

"Why am I standing here from a company that sells electricity telling you how to use less of my product?" he said with a chuckle. "This is actually the least expensive thing we can do to meet future energy needs. This helps us defer the need to build that next power plant."

Energy conservation is a win-win situation, Hines said. Residents can help the environment and save money.

One way to cut energy use and expense is to set your thermostat higher during the day when you aren't home.

"Turn it up five degrees if you are going to be out of the house all day. That's a good rule of thumb," Hines said.

It's a sort of an urban myth that it costs more than it is worth to cool the house back down, Hines said. It will save money to not make the air conditioner work as hard all day.

"Yes, I will use more energy when I come back home, but nowhere near what I saved," he said.

Shedding light on the subject

Although lighting a home only reflects about 7 percent of energy costs, using new CFL bulbs is an easy way to save some money, Hines said.

"Incandescent bulbs are like having 40 to 50 little heaters around your house," he said.

About 90 to 95 percent of the energy used by the traditional incandescent bulbs comes out in the form of heat rather than light, Hines said. He reminded his audience at the college how hot a bulb is when a lamp is on.

CFL bulbs have now come down to about \$1 for an average bulb at many stores. They come in about 60 varieties and some are dimmable.

"Using them is the easiest thing I can do to save energy," Hines said. "A \$1 purchase that's going to put \$40 back in your pocket - that's a pretty good return on your investment."

Not only do the CFL bulbs cost less to use, but they also make it easier to keep your home cool because they don't emit heat.

Hines spoke at the college on request from the Savings and Investment Club and Sustainability Team. The program was Web cast, as well.

Savings and Investment Club founder Erik Huntsinger is an economics professor at the college. He is also involved with the campus' environmental efforts.

"I was thrilled to be able to bring both of these interests together," he said. "It really does pay to go green."

Hines is happy people are taking energy conservation seriously, he said.

"I've been doing this for a long time, and for a long time nobody was paying attention, so it's nice to be popular now."

Beth Kristin Ott can be reached by e-mail at bott@westvalleyview.com.

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