

Chapter 6: Lowering your building's electric bill

This chapter provides a short list of measures building owners can take to reduce electricity consumption. Many investments to reduce electricity consumption have very short payback periods. To reduce electricity consumption, the following should be considered:

1. Purchase electricity generated from renewable sources from your electricity provider or switch to a provider that offers electricity made from renewable sources such as wind, solar or hydro. See, for example, <http://www.sterlingplanet.com/buyConEd.php> or <http://www.energetix.net/>.
2. For all electric appliances, electronics and light fixtures, always purchase units with the EPA Energy Star label. Go to www.energystar.gov to find energy-efficient unit models, compare efficiencies and locate dealers.
3. Change the lighting in apartments to energy-efficient lightbulbs such as compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs). For more information go to www.edf.org/cflguide. Residents can be encouraged to switch to these more efficient lightbulbs by the building management even though the management typically has no control over the residents' or tenants' choice of light fixtures and bulbs. For example, a residential building can create a CFL buying service, making selected bulbs available at wholesale prices.
4. Add automatic lighting controls. Office buildings can be equipped with motion sensors so that the lights turn off automatically at night. For lights without motion sensors, the cleaning crew should be instructed to turn off all the lights at the end of the day.
5. Similarly, fire stairs and hallways of residential buildings can be equipped with bilevel lighting, a mechanism that keeps the lights at code-minimum levels when the space is empty but then switches to normal lighting levels when somebody enters or a door opens. See LaMar Lighting's "Occu-smart" line at www.lamarlighting.com for more information.
6. Replace window and smaller central air conditioners (A/C) with Energy Star units
7. Replace older appliances, especially clothes washing machines, with new Energy Star models.
8. Turn off equipment that is not being used, especially A/C units, when not in use. Put power-sucking appliances like cable boxes on switchable outlet strips, or use smart outlet strips that only turn on when the appliance on one key outlet is switched on.



CFL lightbulbs



Bilevel lighting



Programmable thermostat set at 85 deg. F while home unoccupied in the summer

9. Adjust thermostat for A/C to approximately 75–77°F to save electricity. Turn A/C off when not at home or set unit at 85°F.
10. Keep the A/C units well maintained by making sure the condenser fan is clean and by cleaning or changing the filter every three to six months.
11. Make it a company policy that employees turn off their computers at night and do not use screen savers during the workday. Have IT set up the computers to make the screens go black when not in use.