

Is Your Summer Energy Bill Too High? Why Your AC Might be the Problem

Energy bills arrive every month whether you're ready or not, and there's no doubt that millions of people across the country are actively seeking ways to make them shrink. If your utility bills seem to skyrocket during the summer months, your [air conditioner](#) is likely to blame. Here are some ways in which your AC can take a serious chunk out of your monthly energy budget.

Poor Thermostat Management

The number one cause of unnecessarily high energy bills during the summer months stems from failing to properly manage your thermostat. Many people set the temperature far lower than it needs to be to stay comfortable. On average, your thermostat should be set to about 73 to 75 degrees. Ceiling fans – which use very little energy when compared to your HVAC unit – can help keep you comfortable at this temperature. For every degree lower than this, you significantly drive up your energy costs. In fact, depending on the deviation from the recommended temperature, your bills may almost double.

Using a Standard Thermostat

The second most common cause of high energy bills in the summer is failure to buy, install, and use a programmable thermostat. These days, you can get a really nice digital programmable thermostat for about \$100, and you can get internet-connected options for anywhere from \$200 to \$300.

- **Standard Programmable Thermostat** – This option allows you to set different temperatures at different times, which can keep your air conditioner from working so hard to keep your home comfortable while you are away or asleep. Ideally, you should schedule the thermostat to raise a few degrees once you've left for the day, then schedule it to drop the temperature again just before you come home. You can also schedule these changes during the night hours to save even more energy.
- **Internet Connected Programmable Thermostat** – This sort of thermostat works just like the traditional programmable option, but with some added convenience – you can access your thermostat from your mobile device and make adjustments on the go. If you'll be away later than expected or home sooner than you thought, just adjust the temperature to ensure the perfect balance between energy consumption and comfort.

A Poorly-Maintained Air Conditioner

[Poor air conditioner maintenance](#) is the third most common cause of high energy bills during the summer months. You may view annual air conditioner maintenance as just an added expense that you can avoid, but the truth is that it almost always pays for itself in reduced energy consumption. Checking your air filters and replacing them as needed, keeping the area around your outdoor condenser unit free of debris like leaves and grass, and scheduling professional maintenance (cleaning, lubrication, and repairs) can go a long way toward improving your unit's efficiency and reducing overall energy costs.

An Old, Inefficient, or Improperly Sized AC Unit

Finally, if your air conditioner is more than 15 years old, there's a good chance it is no longer working as it should. What's more, over the course of the last 15 years, air conditioners have become much more energy-efficient. If this applies to you, it is worth your time to consider a new unit. Though it is an investment, it will pay for itself over time in energy savings. You may also experience exceptionally high utility bills if your air conditioner is too small (it will run all the time to try to bring the air temperature down to that on the thermostat) or too large (it cycles on and off repeatedly, which uses a lot of energy.) Fortunately, it's easy to hire a professional for advice.

By following all the advice above, it's possible to reduce your unnecessarily high energy bills in the summer and put more money back in your pocket. This can also help you feel better and more at ease regarding your impact on the environment. In fact, over the course of a single summer, you might just save enough to take a much-needed weekend getaway.