



In The Know

the newsletter for association board members
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Homeowners and Boards Target Energy Waste

Everyone wants a smaller utility bill. As both homeowners and association Boards consider their expenses, energy savings opportunities are often overlooked. Up to 30% of all utility costs can be reduced through energy efficiency measures. A good starting point is to conduct an analysis or energy audit.

Homeowners should always take advantage of free evaluations. Most electric or gas companies offer free energy evaluations to customers who want to see how energy-efficient their home is. The best advice to associations, do an energy audit. Energy audits can be a helpful way for your HOA or condo to determine where you can save more energy. A professional audit can provide lots of helpful information, like where insulation could be improved, how weather patterns effect energy use, and water saving strategies.

Opportunities for saving energy come in four broad areas:

Building Construction & Products

Much can be done to improve a building's "envelope"—the walls, windows, doors, and roof that enclose the structure. Improvements can be done during construction or major maintenance or by retrofitting.

What can homeowner's do? Upgrading insulation can save significantly on heating and cooling costs. Signs that your home is under-insulated includes unusually high energy bills, cold or hot walls, frozen pipes, and fluctuating temperatures in different rooms.

Make sure windows and doors are sealed and that no air is leaking. If you find cracks or air coming in through an electrical outlet, use weather stripping or inexpensive spray insulation foam. Also, remember to keep the fireplace damper closed when not in use.

What can associations do? New building products have been introduced to the market, providing economical options that can benefit an association. These new products provide longevity to the life of the building, decrease maintenance costs, and increase energy savings. A couple of good examples are exterior cladding and energy efficient windows. Also, consider solar-reflective roofing and paint. These coatings utilize reflective qualities to provide additional insulation.

Efficiency of Water Use

The average American family uses more than 300 gallons of water per day. Nationally, outdoor water use accounts for 30 percent of total household use yet can be much higher in water-intensive landscapes.

What can homeowner's do? Look for leaking faucets and running toilets. Just ten drops of water per minute from a faucet wastes approximately 526 gallons of water a year, costing over \$200 per year. Running toilets and dripping irrigation heads can cost more. Use low-flow showerheads. Also, upgrade sprinkler systems if they do not use smart technology to pause when rain occurs.

What can associations do? Change irrigation habits to eliminate overwatering, runoff and evaporation. Initiate a cycle soak program, reduce run times, install moisture sensors, and switch to reclaimed water, if available.

Systems, Appliances, and Lighting

Systems (furnaces, air conditioning, water heaters, pool pumps, spas) appliances (stove, refrigerator, dishwasher, washer/dryer) and lighting type are all items that can vary greatly in their energy use. Review these systems and appliances especially if they were installed before current energy standards and ENERGY STAR certified products.

What can homeowner's do? Consider energy-saving light bulbs that fit in most standard fixtures. Super-efficient LED bulbs are good options since they have come down in price. When shopping for replacements for air conditioning, furnaces, and appliances, look for energy-efficient models designed to conserve power.

What can associations do? Carefully evaluate amenities (clubhouse, pool, street lighting) for opportunities to upgrade equipment to more economical alternatives (efficient cooling towers, solar pool heaters, multi-phase pumps) and better integrate technology (programmable thermostats). Traditional lights waste a good portion of their energy on heat instead of light. Use LED lighting in common areas when possible. They are also long-lasting and reduce the need for replacement.

User Behaviors

Bad habits can cost you. Keeping inside temperatures the same when the home or facility is vacant, is simply a waste. Turning off lights in unused rooms is a no-brainer. Opening windows and using fans can minimize air-conditioning. Washing clothes in cold water, and running the dishwasher only when full are simple steps.

What can homeowner's do? Unplug electronics like TVs, DVDs, chargers, computers, printers and other devices that use electricity even when they are turned off. Shut the shades during the day to reduce air conditioning use. Full refrigerators use less power—and do you really need that old one in the garage? Turn down your water heater to 120 degrees. Clean the lint out of the trap and vents of your dryer for more efficient operation.

What can associations do? Return the thermostat to 78 degrees in summer and 62 degrees in winter in unoccupied rooms in common buildings. Turn off pool/spa heaters during summer months and when the pool is closed. Talk to your homeowners and residents about the importance of conserving energy, and consider creating an energy committee.