

# Common Sense Saves Energy Cents

by Gary Ray, general manager of Albemarle EMC

Bet you didn't know that the average monthly cost to operate an aquarium is \$12.05; a dryer is \$11.22; a dehumidifier is \$17.82 and a deep freezer is \$16.17. Though these may not seem like large amounts, they do all add up with numerous other electrical devices to produce a substantial electricity bill. Below are some basic ways you can reduce your electricity consumption.

## Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC)

- Ensure ducts are sealed tightly to prevent air leaks. Ducts should be sealed with duct mastic.
- Check to make sure that your heat pump defrost is working properly. (Hint: If your unit looks like an igloo, the defrost isn't working.)
- Have a service technician check the refrigerant level and clean the indoor and outdoor coils.
- Make sure that grass clippings, plants and debris are kept away from the outside unit.
- Keep heat no higher than 68 degrees in the winter.
- Change the filter the first of each month.

## Water Heater

- Verify that the pop-off valve and drain valve are not leaking.
- Set water heater temperature to no higher than 120 degrees. For households with one or two members, a 115-degree setting may work fine.
- Install a water heater wrap, if the unit is located in an unconditioned space.
- Insulate exposed hot water lines.
- Limit shower length to five to seven minutes.
- Install low-flow shower heads.
- Wash clothes in cold water; use hot water only for very dirty loads.
- Do only full loads of laundry.
- If you must do smaller loads, adjust the water level in the washing machine to match the load size, especially when using hot water.

## Clothes Dryer

- Keep the dryer filter screen clean. You should also make sure the hose is not kinked or clogged and that the hose is connected to the wall fitting as well as the dryer fitting. You should verify that there is a strong draft leaving the exhaust port and that the draft hood door closes when the dryer is off. Never over-dry clothes; use a moisture sensor if available.

## Refrigerator

- Keep the refrigerator coils clean and make sure the door seals airtight. Unplug unused refrigerators or freezers. Set the refrigerator temperature to 34 to 37 degrees and freezer temperature to zero to five degrees. If your refrigerator has a power-saver setting, turn it on.

## Thermal Envelope

- Keep windows locked to prevent the sashes from separating and letting in drafts.
- If windows are single pane, consider installing storm windows.
- Keep window shades drawn during the day in the summer and open in the winter.
- Consider adding shade screens to exposed west-facing glass.
- Keep fireplace dampers closed when a fire is not lit.
- Caulk around all plumbing penetrations, windows and any other gap or crack. Also, weather strip the attic hatch.