

Seasonal TRENDS

Are Your Energy Dollars Going Into Thin Air?

Americans typically spend about 44 cents of every utility bill dollar for “space conditioning.” Is this money going where you intended, or are there invisible drains on your energy dollars? The answers can be found by asking more questions:

- Do you replace A/C and furnace filters once a month?
- Do you have your central air conditioning system serviced each Spring?
- Have you sealed and insulated leaky ducts? Hire a professional for this job.

A “no” to any of the above could mean some of your money is being wasted.

Bigger is not always better.

If your air conditioning system is more than 8 years old, you may find that the energy dollars you’re already paying can start paying for a new system. But there’s a lot to consider before making your decision. First, make sure the system is sized correctly. Bigger does not always mean you’re getting the best dollar value or more cooling.

The right size, proper installation for cost-effective use, and an energy-efficient model are the keys to getting a good return on your investment.

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Spending less can cost you more.

When you’re shopping for higher priced purchases that require maintenance or operating costs, remember that spending less can cost you more. You may have calculated the “real” costs of a new car – list price, routine service, insurance, and gas mileage. Give that same kind of thought to your heating and air conditioning systems. Three things are *extremely important* in judging a “good buy” versus what could be a cheap rip-off.

- 1. Purchase Price** – Impulse buyers stop here, and it can cost them big! This sometimes *appears* to be a good way to comparison-shop. But it can be a deception that causes you to spend more on...
- 2. Maintenance Costs** – Comparing warranties, reliability, and repair costs is the smartest way to evaluate this component. Ask exactly what’s covered in warranties, since they can be very different – and confusing.
- 3. Operating Costs** – This usually means “ongoing” costs of using the item, such as fuel consumption, power usage and more. Many products show “Operating Costs” to help consumers.

By concentrating on the efficiency of the system, you can end up saving a lot over the lifetime of the system.

The question to ask yourself is simple: Are your energy dollars vanishing into thin air? When you call us for a regular tune-up on your current system, ask for an estimate of how much you can save with a new energy-efficient system.

Speaking COMFORTABLY

Good Ol’ Days

By Dan Hucks

Hello There!



That exclamation point is real! So is this one! Okay, I need to calm down a bit, but I *do* get really excited about Spring. And in this part of the country we celebrate even more because:

- a) We didn’t have to shovel a single snow-filled driveway all winter.
- b) We don’t have to guess when to remove the snow chains.
- c) We do get to prepare for asphalt-melting heat for the next several months.

Yes I know, that last one doesn’t sound like celebration, but “counter-balances” the other ones. Personally, I’ll take the heat any day. As long as there’s air conditioning! (You knew I’d sneak that in.)

But it’s so true. Half of us couldn’t live in Florida without this invention. Yet I remember riding in cars long ago with no air conditioning and not thinking much of it. Kids today hear that and look at me like I’m so old I should’ve sought shade beside a Brontosaurus or something.

So even though I’m not ready to go back to the “good ol’ days” completely, here are a few things that might be nice...

Respect to parents (and elders in general). Age used to earn you some respect, but I see this dwindling. It saddens me to see kids who only consider elders as people who are “slowing them up.”

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Energy-efficient Products Pay Big Returns

With the typical American household spending \$1,400 a year on energy bills, a change to ENERGY STAR appliances can save \$80 a month in energy costs – and help preserve the environment too.

- If all home electronics sold in the U.S. in a year's time were ENERGY STAR qualified, we would reduce air pollution by 27 billion pounds – equivalent to removing about 350,000 cars from the road.
- If every U.S. household replaced their five most frequently used light fixtures with ENERGY STAR qualified models, each household would save more than \$60 each year in energy costs. We'd also collectively save an amount of energy equivalent to the annual output of more than 20 power plants and keep more than 1 trillion pounds of greenhouse gases out of our air.
- In 2002 alone, with the help of ENERGY STAR, Americans saved enough energy to power 15 million homes and avoid greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those from 14 million cars – all while saving \$7 billion.

Consider ENERGY STAR for your next electronics or appliance purchase. The money you save on your utility bills can more than make up for the cost of a more expensive but more efficient ENERGY STAR model.

Source: Environmental Protection Agency

Beware: Overimproving Your Home Can Mean an "Over the Top" Resell Price

Improving your home is one of the best ways to maintain or increase its value while improving your quality of life. But, if you're not careful, too much of a good thing can pretty soon become a bad thing.

If you're launching into a home improvement project to increase resale value, be aware that "overimprovements" can cost you in several ways. First, you'll spend more than you can recoup in the sale of your home. Second, if the improvements aren't typical for your neighborhood, your house will become an oddity rather than a commodity.

For instance, every neighborhood has its own spending limit, or an amount potential buyers will pay to locate in that neighborhood. So, the practical result is that, if you spend \$50,000 to improve a \$200,000 home in a like-priced area, you've put your house on the high end in your neighborhood.

The point is: keeping up with the Joneses is fine. Just don't get past them.

So, how much is too much? Consider these areas for basic guidelines:

Painting: This is usually a good choice. A new exterior paint job enhances your home's "curb appeal," the buzz phrase in real estate that means the same as "a good first impression."



Kitchens and Bathrooms: According to a survey conducted by the National Association of Realtors, remodeling the kitchen or bathrooms is among the best ways to add value to a house. It is estimated that 94% percent of the cost of a major kitchen remodel and 73% of bathroom remodeling can be recouped when selling your home within one year of the home improvement.

Additions: This moves into an area of greater expense, but it can pay dividends at selling. The same survey indicated that about 84% of the cost of an addition

can be recouped if the house is sold within one year after the addition was added. But take care that the design and execution does not interrupt the home's flow.

Converting Basements and Attics: Converting unused space into living quarters may get you more room, but not necessarily more money. A livable attic can get you about 75% of your money back. For a basement, it's about 69%.

Other Areas: While a deck only brings about half the cost back, a pool offers little in increased value. In fact swimming pools actually limit the buyers interested in your home. Also, be careful of too much customization. The more your house seems like "you," the less likely it is that others would want to buy it.

Regardless of your decisions on remodeling, it's important to keep in mind that there's a difference between improving and maintaining. For a house to hold its value, its structure must be maintained, and that includes anything related to the plumbing and electrical systems as well as roofing and landscaping. Don't slack in these critical areas.

Sources: Homestore.com, Wall Street Journal Online USA Weekend

A Cool HISTORY



When Willis Carrier designed his first air conditioning system in 1902, his customer was a frustrated Brooklyn, N.Y. printer who couldn't print a decent color image because changes in heat and humidity kept changing the paper's dimensions and misaligning the colored inks.

For nearly two decades, Carrier's invention was meant for the comfort of machines or industrial processes rather than people. It wasn't until 1906 that Carrier, then employed by the Buffalo Forge Company, patented his first device – "An Apparatus for Treating Air".

Save Your Skin This Season

The sun's warm rays are a welcome reprieve in the Spring and Summer. But with sunshine comes one of the most common skin disorders—sunburn. The damage caused by sunburn and over-exposure to the sun is responsible for wrinkles, liver spots, thinning of the skin, broken blood vessels and skin cancer. The American Cancer Society estimates that skin cancer claims the lives of about 9,800 Americans per year.

For that reason, nobody should be outside tanning anymore.

Tanning is a direct response to injury from UV radiation. Any coloration is your skin's reaction to damage. The sun's ultraviolet radiation is the cause of most skin cancers, and, unfortunately, skin cancer is affecting more and more people each year. **Skin cancer is now the most common**

type of cancer in the United States.

Everyone needs to be aware of the dangers caused by the sun and take the proper precautions like using sunscreen.

"The American Cancer Society estimates that skin cancer claims the lives of about 9,800 Americans per year."

There are two different types of sunscreen: organic and physical. Organic sunscreens are composed of substances such as Parsol 1789, hydrogen and carbon. They protect your skin by absorbing UV rays. Organic sunscreens come in many forms including gels, sprays and lotions, but sometimes cause allergic

reactions. They also take time to be effective (usually 20 to 30 minutes), and wear off.

Physical sunscreens are composed of chemicals such as zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, which work by reflecting the sun's rays. They cause no allergic reactions, are effective immediately and last longer. For these reasons, most experts recommend physical sunscreens.

You also need to check and make sure any sunscreen you chose is a **broad-spectrum product**. This means it blocks both UVA and UVB rays. Look for SPF (sun protection factor) 15 or higher too.

Other measures that are easy and make a difference are wearing protective clothing, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses whenever you are out in the sun. Society holds a golden tan as a feature associated with beauty, and that makes many of these habits difficult.

This Summer, don't hesitate to go out for some fun in the sun. Just take precautions and your skin will thank you later.

What does the Carrier Factory Authorized Dealer Designation Mean to You?

Evaluating a dealer requires work. It's an important process because choosing the right dealer can make the difference between getting the most comfort and efficiency for your money or getting stuck with a system that doesn't meet your needs.

That's why Carrier established the Carrier Factory Authorized Dealer (CFAD) designation. Only dealers who meet the highest standards and closest scrutiny earn this distinction – not just for their technical expertise, but also for their business practices and customer service quality.

Celebrating 100 years of innovation and the invention of modern air conditioning by its founder, Willis Carrier, Carrier Corporation is the world's largest manufacturer of heating, air conditioning and refrigeration systems and equipment.

What does this mean to you? It means that Carrier has already done the legwork so you don't have to.

You have a busy life filled with other activities and interests that you enjoy far more than "shopping" for the right home comfort dealer. So, keep more time for what you enjoy.

Just look for the Carrier Factory Authorized Dealer designation. It's your sure sign of a dealer that will provide you with better products, better knowledge and better service – **guaranteed!**

We are proud of our CFAD designation, but more importantly we are pleased to be backed by Carrier's **100% satisfaction guarantee**. We are not satisfied until you are!

Carrier's Environmentally Sound Puron is EPA-approved and helps protect our world. Home Comfort News is printed on recycled paper, helping save valuable trees.

Enjoy the wonderful resources we have and please recycle when you can.



Quik TIPS

Use these tips from the EPA to save energy

- Set your hot water heater thermostat at 120° (or "low").
- Wrap your hot water tank in an insulating "blanket" if it feels warm to the touch.
- When cooking, match pot size to burner size and keep the lid on it to avoid waste.
- Plant trees to shade the south side of your home from the hot summer sun.
- Turning off your computer during long periods of non-use cuts costs and improves longevity.
- Clean or replace furnace and air conditioner filters once a month during heating/cooling season.

SPEAKING COMFORTABLY

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More movies with a moral lesson.

The classics always had a theme with a life lesson. Great stuff. The "popular" movies I see these days seem to be more about "getting what's mine and more of it."

More family entertainment. There's too much individual entertainment. I'd like to see more car trips. Board games. Walks together. Actual, real, personal visits. Web "chats" do not count!

You know, all these things are still around, but it just doesn't get reported on much. (Hey that's why you're reading *HomeComfort News!*) Many times, it comes down to making good choices, regardless of "what's popular".

That's part of why we send this newsletter. Yes it costs us a little, but we hope you enjoy the always-popular topics on saving money, time, and getting more comfort from your home!

And don't forget that Spring is tune up time. I mean, like right now. The sooner you get yours done, the sooner you can shave some dollars off that utility bill and enjoy the cool conditioned air! Ah yes, modern technology has brought us some joys after all.

Give us a call so we can bring you a little joy too. Thanks for reading this,



Dan Hucks

P.S. Please tell your friends and neighbors about us! We'd be delighted to know more of your friends and help them too.

How would you like to save at least \$10.00 in 10 seconds?



Ready? Go! Ask our friendly receptionist or tech, "Can I get on your **Energy Savings Agreement** program?"

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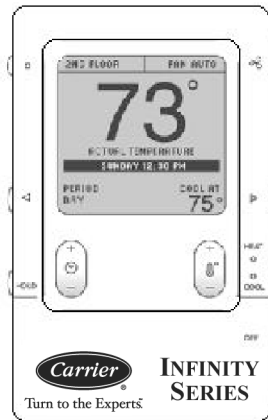
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