

Air Conditioners – what condition they really leave the air

Air conditioners, particularly older models, contribute to smog and climate change by creating a large demand on electricity production at the worst possible time - the hottest days of summer. When the temperature rises, the use of coal-fired electricity soars, leading to major smog on hot, humid days.

The average window air conditioner generates 1.3 tonnes of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) yearly - a significant portion of a household's contribution to climate change. Older window air conditioners use 30-70% more energy than new efficient models.

From June 20-29, 2003, the Clean Air Foundation will be running Keep Cool, a window air conditioner exchange program. Customers who bring in an old window air conditioner will be offered a rebate towards the purchase of a new Panasonic Energy Star qualified model at selected Future Shop locations including 2625 Weston Rd. and 5576 Yonge St. Energy Star products require less energy for the same amount of cooling which means fewer greenhouse gas emissions. The Clean Air Foundation will recycle the materials and refrigerant from your old air conditioner free of charge, even if you don't buy a new one. For more information on the Keep Cool program visit http://www.cleanairfoundation.org/keep_cool/ or telephone 416-922-9038.

If you are considering an air conditioner, remember that it's more efficient to use a room air conditioner than central air, which uses whopping 20-50 kilowatt-hours per day. There are efficient Energy Star products of both types. The Office of Energy Efficiency <http://www.oeo.nrcan.gc.ca/Equipment/english/page38.cfm?> has information on the most efficient models, and how to choose the right-sized unit for your house. If you have central air, adjust your vents to cool only the rooms you are using, and use a programmable thermostat to ensure you're not cooling the house when no one is home. Set the thermostat to 25C- it doesn't have to be a chilly 20C indoors to be comfortable.

What you can do

You can save money and energy and be more comfortable by keeping the heat outside. You may not even need air conditioning! Here are a few tips to reduce the amount of cooling you need:

- Plant deciduous trees on the south side of your house for shade in summer and sun in winter. They also absorb CO₂.
- Close the blinds or curtains to block out the sun. You can get retractable shades for skylights. Install retractable awnings or overhangs over south-facing windows to allow heat in winter and block summer sun. Heat-reflective coatings are available from companies that tint car windows.
- Open windows at night to promote cool air circulation. Use ceiling and space fans.
- Use heat-generating appliances (dishwashers, clothes dryers) early in the morning or after sunset. Even better, air-dry your clothes and dishes. Use your microwave or toaster oven instead of your large oven if possible.
- Use cool, efficient compact fluorescent lightbulbs. Turn household lights off when not needed.
- If re-roofing, choose light-coloured shingles to reflect heat. Install an electric attic fan with a thermostat to remove the stale hot air.

The savings:

Air conditioning uses 11% of the average household's electricity. Central AC costs about \$200 per year on average. A high-efficiency unit can save \$135 annually.

If 1 in 10 households in Caledon upgraded to a high efficiency air conditioner, we would save almost 3.4 million kWh of electricity annually - enough to power 283 households. We would also prevent the emissions of 3000 tonnes of climate-changing CO2 and reduce other smog-causing gases. If 1 in 10 households decided to stop air conditioning, these numbers would double.

For more information about this or other topics in the Caledon Clean Air Clean Energy Program, you can reach us at greenenergy@woodrising.com or 519-927-0548, or visit <http://www.woodrising.com/cca/stepup.htm>



Step Up To Kyoto. Future generations will thank-you a tonne.