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Energy Sense: Apartments

Cooperative Extension South Dakota State University

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ENERGY SENSE:

apartments



Cooperative Extension Service
South Dakota State University
U.S. Department of Agriculture

apartments

“How can I conserve energy? I’m concerned (I drive an energy-efficient car), but I live in an apartment. Isn’t energy conservation the responsibility of the building owner?” These questions represent the feelings of many apartment occupants.

The response? Yes, many energy conservation measures—storm windows and storm doors, insulation, separate meters, and thermostats, for example—are the responsibility of the building owner. But there is much you, the tenant, can do by becoming an energy advocate and by making efficient use of energy in your apartment.

Your Role as Energy Advocate

The most important thing you can do as an apartment occupant-energy advocate is to convey to the owner of your building your sentiments about the need to conserve our limited energy resources. In person or by letter, point out how energy is being wasted in your building.

Are there drafts around windows and doors? Ask the building owner to weather-strip windows and doors and to fill cracks with caulking compound. Also ask the owner to consider installing storm windows and storm doors if there are none on the building. (4- or 6-mil plastic sheeting is an inexpensive but

effective substitute for glass.) The combination of weather stripping, caulking, storm windows and storm doors can reduce energy requirements and costs as much as 10 to 30 percent.

Is your building adequately insulated? If not, recommend that insulation be installed in the ceiling and sidewalls. This, too, has a very positive effect on energy conservation.

Are some areas of your building heated unnecessarily? (Basements and storage areas are common culprits.) Let your building owner know about this, but also point out that heating ducts and water pipes in unheated areas should be insulated so that heat is not lost.

Don’t drop your efforts on behalf of energy conservation after one letter or conversation. Be persistent. Energy shortages will persist until enough people care to do something about them.

Energy Conservation: A Two-Way Street

Rising energy costs affect building owner and tenants alike. If heat is included in rental fees, the building owner is realizing lower profits and tenants can expect a rent increase when lease renewal time comes around. If apartments are separately me-

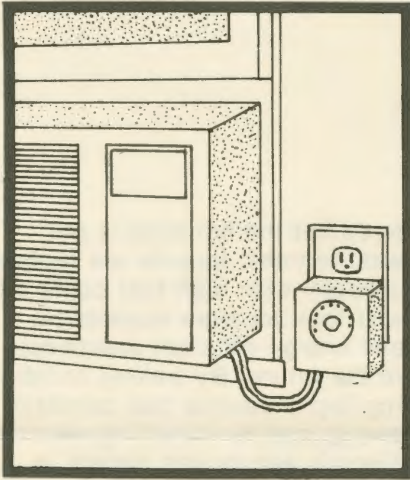
tered but the building is not weathertight, tenants are probably unhappy with high fuel costs and will look for more economical and energy-efficient apartments in the future. By making building improvements that conserve energy and by installing separate electric and/or gas meters, a building owner gives the tenant an incentive to conserve energy and maintains a competitive position in the apartment marketplace.

Energy Conservation Tips for Apartment Occupants

There are many small ways you can conserve energy in your apartment. Small, consistent efforts by individuals add up to big savings for everyone.

If you have a thermostat, keep it set between 65° and 68° during the day and set it back to 60° at night. Don’t “fiddle” with a thermostat setting; that wastes energy. If you feel chilly, put on a sweater. Keep heat registers, radiators, or baseboard heating units free of dust and don’t block them with furniture.

Air conditioners, while often of great benefit to apartment dwellers, consume huge amounts of energy. An energy advocate uses a cooling unit prudently. If you want a cool apartment when you get home from work, connect the unit to a timer and set it to go on a half-hour before



your arrival time. A thermostat setting of 78°F or above is strongly recommended for air conditioned areas. Site a window unit in the window of your apartment that is most protected from direct sunlight. Keep windows and doors closed when an air conditioner is running and close draperies and/or shades on sunny windows, but don't block the cooling unit.

The hot water you take for granted in your apartment re-

quires large amounts of energy to heat it. Instead of baths, take quick showers; you'll use less hot water. Try to cut down on the number of times you use your dishwasher. Run only full loads, preferably in the early morning or late evening when energy demands on utility companies are lowest. If you wash dishes by hand, don't let water run continuously; fill a pan with hot water for rinsing. Use as low a water temperature for washing clothes as will give satisfactory cleaning; use cold water for rinsing.

Because single-pane glass is a poor insulator, a great deal of heat can be lost through windows. Plasticized roller shades, tightly sealed on all edges, can considerably reduce this type of heat loss. When choosing more elaborate window coverings, select glass fiber draperies lined with insulated material. A cornice over the top of the draperies will prevent a draft tunnel effect. On overcast winter days

and at night, keep shades and draperies closed; open them on sunny days to take advantage of solar heat. In summer, keep windows closed and covered during the hottest hours of the day; open windows, top and bottom, after sunset. If possible, open windows opposite one another to get cross ventilation.

One in a series of home energy conservation fact sheets. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the USDA. Hollis D. Hall, Director of CES, SDSU, Brookings. Educational programs offered without regard to age, race, color, religion, sex, handicap, or national origin. An Equal Opportunity Employer.

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