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Media Contact: Mollie Gore
Corporate Communications
843-761-7093
mrgore@santeecooper.com

Savvy Summertime Thermostat Settings *Green Living: Energy-Saving Tips from Santee Cooper*

MONCKS CORNER, S.C. — While the official start of summer is not until June 21, the warm weather has long since settled into the area. The days are growing longer as we approach the summer solstice, meaning the heat is also lingering.

The summertime can be a relentless stretch for your home's air conditioning, which is why it is important to be savvy with your thermostat.

The U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy says heating and cooling your home uses more energy and drains more energy dollars than any other system, typically accounting for 43 percent of your power bill. You can improve the performance of your HVAC system by regularly replacing its air filter and through annual routine maintenance, but one of the easiest ways to save money is at the thermostat.

"When it comes to setting your thermostat for cooling, try to forget about the number 72," says Zack Dusenbury, vice president of retail operations. "Instead, aim for a setting of about 78 degrees. You won't sacrifice that much in comfort, but you will see an improvement in your bill."

If you're going to be away from your home for an extended period of time (longer than eight hours), Dusenbury recommends setting the temperature a few degrees higher to save even more money. Programmable thermostats can be useful for homeowners looking for more customized control over their HVAC system, but changes in settings for heat pumps should be minimal for best performance.

"If your home is equipped with a heat pump, it's important to avoid drastic changes in your thermostat's settings," Dusenbury adds. "Maintaining a moderate setting proves to be most cost-effective."

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