

NEWS RELEASE

March 8, 2010

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Green Living: Energy Saving Tips from Santee Cooper Green

MONCKS CORNER, S.C. —January brought some of the coldest temperatures South Carolina has seen in 40 years and February brought record snow for the decade, making it difficult to imagine that warmer days are ahead. But daylight saving time begins March 14, and the first day of spring is March 20.

As South Carolina thaws, it will be important to properly prepare your heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) system for the longer, warmer days of spring and summer. The U.S. Department of Energy estimates as much as half of the energy used in a U.S. home is devoted to heating and cooling, so it's important to keep these systems running efficiently.

The first, and most simple, step you can take is to change your air filter regularly. A dirty air filter will restrict airflow and make your HVAC system work harder to keep you cool.

“You should inspect your air filter every month,” said Santee Cooper Vice President of Retail Operations Zack Dusenbury. “If the filter looks dirty after one month’s use, change it. At a minimum, you should change the filter every three months.”

As with any machinery that operates year-round, it's essential to have your HVAC systems serviced annually. Proper maintenance by a qualified technician is an important step in ensuring the long-term reliability of your HVAC system. The milder months of spring are an ideal time to have your system checked because contractors are typically less busy than during the summer months.

Your HVAC system's ductwork is another area to remember. Ducts are used to distribute conditioned air throughout the home, and in a typical scenario 20 percent of that air is lost to leaks, holes and poorly connected ducts. The result is an inefficient HVAC system, higher utility bills and difficulty keeping your home comfortable.

Because ducts are often concealed in walls, ceilings, attics and basements, repairing them can be difficult. But there are things DOE says you can do to improve duct performance in your home.

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Start by sealing leaks with duct sealant (mastic) or metal-backed (foil) tape in the parts of the home that you can access, like the attic, crawlspace, basement or garage.

“Avoid using duct tape, because it’s not as durable as foil tape or mastic sealant,” Dusenbury says.

After sealing the ducts in those spaces, wrap them in insulation. Also make sure the connections at vents and registers are well sealed where they meet the floors, walls and ceiling.

If your HVAC equipment is more than 10 years old or is struggling to keep your home comfortable, it might need replacing. Santee Cooper offers low-interest loans for such upgrades, and more information can be found at www.santeecooper.com. If you’re in the market for an ENERGY STAR HVAC system, the S.C. Energy Office will be offering rebates of \$500 for heat pumps and gas furnaces, as well as rebates for other appliances, beginning March 31. Visit www.appliancerebates.sc.gov for more information on this program.

Santee Cooper is South Carolina’s state-owned electric and water utility, and the state’s largest power producer. The ultimate source of electricity for 2 million South Carolinians, Santee Cooper is dedicated to being the state’s leading resource for improving the quality of life for the people of South Carolina. For more information, visit www.santeecooper.com.