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## **Saving Energy on Summer Space Cooling** *by Saskatchewan's Office of Energy Conservation*

Air conditioners—especially central air conditioners—are becoming much more common in Canada. With more and more Canadians trying to maintain a year round “comfort zone” in their homes, the number of central units grew from 1.3 million in 1990 to 2.9 million in 2003, an increase of 113 percent.

Staying cool on hot summer days can use a lot of energy and increase greenhouse gas emissions. That is why many homeowners are looking for ways to reduce energy consumption and lower their space cooling bills.

If you are buying a new central air conditioning system or replacing an old one, consider purchasing a unit with a SEER rating of 13 or higher. SEER stands for *Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio*, which indicates how efficiently the unit can cool your home. The higher the number the better. The more energy efficient units carry the ENERGY STAR® symbol and have a SEER rating of 14 or more. ENERGY STAR® is a symbol of premium energy efficiency; being ENERGY STAR® qualified means that the manufacturer has demonstrated that its product meets strict technical specifications endorsed by the Canadian and American governments.

You should be aware that Canada intends to propose a regulation that will increase the minimum standard of central air conditioners sold in Canada to SEER 13. This regulatory change under Canada's Energy Efficiency Regulations would match with the United States' requirement that all new central air conditioners sold there must meet SEER 13. As a result of the new US rule, there is a chance that less efficient units with a SEER rating of 10, which can no longer be sold in the U.S., could make their way into Canada. Over the next few months, it will be important to make sure the unit you purchase has a SEER rating of at least 13 and not just the ENERGY STAR® label.

A well-qualified contractor can help you make the right choices and install a system for maximum efficiency of operation. An appropriately sized and well-installed unit will give you the best results. Remember, larger is not always better—an oversized unit will short-cycle and will not dehumidify properly.

Whether you have a high efficiency model or not, there are a number of things that can be done to help lower energy use for space cooling:

- Since bright sunlight heats up the house, use drapes, blinds, or awnings to reduce daytime heating.
- Locate the outdoor condensing unit where it will be shaded from the summer sun. Locate filters and controls where they can be easily accessed and replaced. Maintain adequate space around the outdoor unit to avoid airflow restriction through the coils.



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- Insulate the cooling line and avoid a long cooling line run on the outside of the house.
- Ensure that there is adequate airflow past the evaporator coil (A-coil) in the furnace plenum to avoid freezing problems.
- Set the thermostat so the cooling system does not come on unless the house is 25°C or warmer. With a programmable thermostat, the system can be off when you are away from home and turned on shortly before your return.
- If you are replacing your furnace, consider a high-efficiency unit, combined with an energy-efficient, variable speed motor. Using high-efficiency fans or blower motors to circulate cool air will use substantially less energy.
- Proper use and maintenance of your system also helps reduce energy consumption.
  - Keep the outside unit clean and clear of leaves and debris.
  - Vacuum dirt and dust from the indoor A-coil once a year to prevent restricted airflow.
  - Replace filters regularly.
  - Turn off the power to the unit in the winter and restore it at least one day before its first use in the summer.

Together, these products and practices will help you lower the environmental impact of space cooling while reducing your energy bills.