

Top Tips for Saving Energy in Small Businesses

Here's a checklist of energy-saving measures that cost little or nothing and will return big savings on your energy bills. They are easy to implement, whether you own or rent your work space.

- Turn lights, computers, and other equipment off when they are not in use. This is easy to do, once you think about it. Let workers know that you appreciate their help in this effort. Computers often have an energy-saver mode, but workers sometimes disable it. Consider adding automatic controls, too, such as programmable thermostats, timers, and occupancy sensors. A programmable thermostat can cut heating and cooling costs by a third, compared to a building that does not use energy-saving settings.
- Share your enthusiasm for saving energy with workers and customers. Post energy-saving tips for workers, and reward them for useful suggestions. Consider posting small signs to request customer support on closing doors, turning off bathroom lights, and shutting off faucets. You can also show your community spirit by letting people know you support local energy and environmental programs, or purchase green power.
- Regularly change or clean filters in heating, ventilating, and cooling (HVAC) equipment. During peak heating or cooling season, change or clean filters monthly. They usually cost about \$3, but a new filter can save \$5 or more per month. You will also enjoy the cleaner air.
- Have a contractor clean and tune your HVAC system annually. This will increase operating efficiency and may prevent costly emergency repairs.
- Use fans whenever possible. Ceiling fans, which gently move room air, add comfort and save energy. According to Energy Star, you can raise summer air-conditioning temperatures by 3 to 5 degrees with no loss of comfort if you add ceiling fans. Every degree raised on the thermostat typically saves about 3 percent on cooling costs. Switch reversible fans in winter, to pull cool air upward and force warm, risen air back downward.
- When replacing lights, use compact fluorescent lamps in place of incandescent bulbs, and use lower-wattage fluorescent tubes in place of old fluorescent tubes. Compact fluorescent lamps last up to 10 times longer and use a fraction of the energy compared to incandescent bulbs. Look for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star label to assure the highest quality. With fluorescent tubes, take the extra step of changing the ballast, which holds the tube and controls voltage, from a magnetic to electronic model. Then you will save on the energy the ballast requires, plus you can use newer T8 or T5 tubes.

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