



Saving Energy Saves the Environment and Your Pocketbook

By Sinclair W Stickle

An effective way to get with the "Green" program is to recognize that air conditioning consumes a large percentage of total household energy. We need to minimize this consumption by utilizing a number of energy management strategies.

Energy management systems have been available for commercial and industrial applications for more than thirty years. The good news is that recent developments in digital technology have reduced the cost to levels that make residential and light commercial applications relatively inexpensive.

Homeowners are becoming more and more knowledgeable about energy-saving criteria. In purchasing appliances and air conditioners, many have become familiar with programmable thermostats capable of automatically changing temperature set points during occupied and unoccupied periods. However, for residences that are rarely left unoccupied, such thermostats may not offer appreciable savings, except in the heating season when the temperature can be set back at bedtime.



A unique type of thermostat is now available that can be programmed and monitored from a laptop computer, iPhone, or Blackberry. This allows for internet access, so that monitoring and control of the air conditioning system can be performed from anywhere in the world while the home owner is on vacation or away for an extended period of time. This

not only provides peace of mind but, if a problem is apparent, the owner can contact a neighbor or air conditioning service company to check the system.

Also in Florida, it is common to leave the air conditioner running to prevent mold while the occupants are away. The programmable thermostat can be set to operate the air conditioning system for one or two hours a day in order to maintain low humidity and save energy.

This system also works well in small commercial applications and is a major source of energy savings in churches, where air conditioning systems are often left running during extended unoccupied periods of time. Recently, as my wife and I were driving through Maryland on our way back to Florida, my wife was using her laptop computer to access the thermostats in our church back home. A memorial service was about to begin and we wanted to make sure the air conditioning system was operating properly. We checked the graph history for the previous hours and found the temperature was tracking the set point changes; however, we decided to lower the temperature another degree anyway. After the service, the temperature set point automatically returned to the unoccupied setting.



Large consumers of electricity pay a penalty to the power company based on a demand rate. This calculation is usually based on the maximum electricity used during any fifteen-minute interval during the billing period. Through demand control strategies, energy management systems can save significant levels of energy by constantly monitoring electric consumption and shedding loads to prevent or minimize excessive energy consumption during the demand period.

For example, in the early 1980's, I installed a system to minimize the power demand penalty at WHY-TV studios in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, that would ramp up the air conditioning thermostat settings and, if necessary, sequentially shut down units whenever the high-power-consuming studio lights would be turned on.

Today, with web-based technology, there are many opportunities to install energy management systems for both commercial and residential applications that will increase comfort within the home or business, save energy, and accommodate most budgets.

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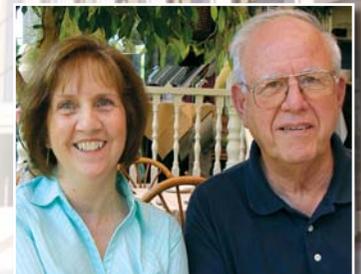
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