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Proper thermostat helps conservation

Energy efficiency during the winter can take many forms, from weatherstripping, to caulking to installing shades or drapes. Where it all begins, however, is with the proper use of your room thermostat.

The thermostat, of course, controls the amount of heat emitted into a room. Turning the thermostat down at night or when the house is empty can be one of the most efficient — and inexpensive — ways to save energy. The greater the setback — which is the difference between the high and low settings — and the longer its duration, the more energy saved.

ACCORDING TO Edison Electric Institute, a homeowner can achieve a 14-percent saving on fuel by lowering the thermostat setting from 68 degrees to 60 degrees for eight hours every night. A setback from 68 degrees to 55 degrees will increase the saving to 20 percent. This is significant when you consider the effect on your monthly heating bill.

The problem with a manual or a standard thermostat is that you must remember to adjust it daily. You also have to be willing to put up with a chill until the furnace starts to warm things up.

One solution is the automatic thermo-

stat. At a cost of between \$25 and \$100, these units will switch from a normal to a setback temperature and back again at a preset time each day.

"For the most part automatic thermostats are cost efficient and easy to install," said Robert J. Griffin, a spokesman for Edison Electric Institute. "Most units are 'two wired' and do not need any new wiring to replace an existing thermostat."

THE MOST popular automatic models are "clock timers," which have movable pins that switch the unit between normal and setback temperatures. By removing the pins, you can control the duration of the setback periods. You then set the units for the normal and setback temperatures desired. The thermostat takes over from there.

For those households that don't keep to regular schedules, the "wind up" units may be most appropriate. These work like kitchen timers and have to be wound to start each setback period and determine its duration.

All models normally have setback periods from one to 23 hours and will control normal temperatures from 45 to 90 degrees.

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