



NEWS RELEASE

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As summer heat lingers, MAE offers seniors tips on how to stay cool and keep utility bills down

LANSING, Mich. – The Michigan Agency for Energy (MAE) today offered tips for senior citizens to stay cool this summer while keeping their energy bills in check.

Summertime can be dangerous for seniors, who are more vulnerable to extreme temperatures than others. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), older adults don't adjust well to sudden changes in temperature. Some have medical conditions or are taking medications that affect a body's response to heat or ability to moderate temperature.

"As we move into the hottest part of summer with long spells of high temperatures, it's vitally important that our older Michiganders know how to beat the heat while keeping their energy bills affordable," said Anne Armstrong Cusack, MAE's executive director. "We also want to remind family, friends, and neighbors to check in on seniors throughout the summer to make sure they are OK and discuss energy-saving tips with them."

For instance, make sure their air conditioning unit is running efficiently or that they have a portable fan. (But, even fans might not be enough to keep someone cool in extreme heat.) If the senior's home has a basement, encourage them to spend some time downstairs, where it's usually cooler than in the main areas of the house.

Here are some practical ways to stay cool during hot summer months and keep utility bills in check:

- If concerned about the cost of running air conditioning, go to a friend's house that has air conditioning, an area cooling center, the local mall, the senior center, or a movie theater to get out of the heat.
- Set the temperature on your air conditioner higher at cooler times of the day and lower during the hottest periods. Installing a programmable thermostat takes the guess work out of adjusting the air conditioning system.
- Keep curtains or blinds closed to keep the sun from warming a home's interior.
- Use ceiling fans or portable fans to circulate the air in the home.
- Drink plenty of cool, non-alcoholic fluids to keep your body temperature in check.
- Sign up for a budget plan with your utility to even out the cost of staying cool in the summer and warm in the winter.
- Run appliances such as the dishwasher, washing machine or clothes dryer in the evening or at night during off-peak hours.
- Shut the air vents in parts of the house that aren't used or close off unoccupied rooms to keep the cool air where it's needed. This can save 5 to 10 percent on cooling costs.

Outside help is available for seniors concerned about their utility bills:

- The Michigan Public Service Commission's (MPSC) Customer Assistance hotline at (800) 292-9555 can help with issues related to utilities.
- The Aging and Adult Services Agency (AASA), which is part of the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), can provide contact information for local Area Agencies on Aging (AAA). Call AASA at (517) 373-8230 or [click here](#) to connect with an AAA and to learn more about local resources such as cooling centers.
- Contact Consumers Energy Co. or DTE Energy Co. for information on programs that allow income-eligible customers to make payments if they receive a shutoff notice and are unable to pay their bill in full.
- Call 211 for information and referrals for agencies that can assist with utility payments.
- Older adults can get help with utility issues by calling the Legal Hotline for Michigan Seniors at (800) 347-5297.

Check out [Programs and Protections for Senior Citizens](#) and [Beat the Heat and Save](#) tip sheets for more information, or go to the [CDC's website](#) or [Michigan Prepares](#) for keys to staying cool and healthy.