

A little care in home maintenance can help save energy and cut your electricity bill by up to 15 per cent each month

BE PRACTICAL

Save

POWER, SAVE MONEY

SURPIYA UNNI

BEFORE YOU pester your interior decorator to give you that glitzy look in your living room with 16 bulbs on a false ceiling, think about your pocket. Architects and interior designers are now urging clients to go environment friendly, explaining that it's not just about conserving energy. It helps in cutting down the cost of the overall maintenance.

"I make it a point to advise clients in the initial stages of the design on how they can effectively cut costs, and save energy," says Nayanatara Nair, architect at AK Architects, Thiruvananthapuram.

"You can save up to 15 per cent per month on your electricity bill if you make a little effort," she adds.

Heating using solar paneling, with efficient water supply systems and converting to CFL bulbs are some of the options that architects recommend.

In urban areas, most people these days live in a flat or an apartment. So, working out structural designs may not be feasible or practical.

However, a number of developers have started going 'green' on their housing projects.

Hyderabad-based SatyaVani Homes is one of them.

To involve his clients totally in his green initiatives, SatyaVani Homes has decided to incentivise the customer by subsidising power for 25 years by Rs 18,000 per annum. "We are planning to bring down connected power load. Normal buildings need 12 MW of connected power. We are making this a zero carbon power. We call this green power," says Surya Prakash, managing partner, SatyaVani Homes.

Architects say these are a lot of practical guidelines that we can follow, which may seem trivial but in the long run will push down bill amount. "Clients laugh when I say that a bath tub is superfluous. I tell them to avoid bath tubs. Taking 5-10 minute baths instead of tub baths will save hot water. About 15 per cent of bills go into heating water," says Nair.

The Bureau of Efficient Energy, a statutory body under the ministry of power, has put out a public notice to citizens outlining tips to consumers on how to save energy.

They have calculated how much of money can be saved through the tips.

Some of these include:

- Turn off lights when not required.
- Dirty tube lights and bulbs reflect less light and can absorb 50 percent of the light; dust your tube lights and lamps regularly.
- Fluorescent tube lights and CFLs convert electricity to visible light up to 5 times more efficiently than ordinary bulbs, and thus, save about 70% of electricity for the same lighting levels. Ninety per cent of the energy consumed by an ordinary bulb is given off as heat rather than visible light.
- Use ceiling or table fan as first line of defence against summer heat. Ceiling fans, for instance, cost about 30 paise an hour to operate - much less than air conditioners (Rs10 per hour).
- You can reduce air-conditioning energy use by as much as 40 per cent by shading your home's windows and walls. Plant trees and shrubs to keep the day's hottest part off your house.
- 3 to 5 per cent less energy is used for each degree of an air conditioner set above 22°C, so

set the thermostat of room air conditioner at 25°C to provide the maximum comfort at the least cost.

- Keep doors to air-conditioned rooms closed as often as possible.
- Make sure that refrigerator is kept away from all sources of heat, including direct sunlight, radiators and appliances such as the oven, and cooking range.
- Turn off your home office equipment when not in use. A computer that runs 24-hours-a-day, for instance, uses more power than an energy-efficient refrigerator.
- Setting computers, monitors, and copiers to use sleep-mode when not in use helps cut energy costs by approximately 40 per cent.
- Reduce the temperature setting of a water heater from 60 degrees to 50 degrees C, and save over 18 per cent of the energy used at a higher setting.
- Microwaves save energy by reducing cooking time. You save up to 50 per cent on your cooking energy costs by using a microwave oven instead of a regular oven.