



Heating and Cooling Systems: We Can't Air-Condition the Planet

Six ways to be comfortable using less fossil fuel



- Switch to HVAC powered by electricity
- Install a programmable thermostat that turns systems down/off when you're not at home
- Use a box fan or a ceiling fan rather than air conditioning
- Work with sun, shade and airflow to warm or cool your home
- Pressure the Office of Energy Resources to add an incentives program for air source heat pumps
- Spend time in public places that maintain a comfortable temperature

Here in New England, we need to heat our homes and other indoor spaces in order to get through the winter. As the climate warms, we're more and more often having to cool those spaces as well. Heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment

powered by renewably generated electricity rather than by natural gas or fuel oil reduces the fossil fuel burden of heating and cooling.

Using more energy-efficient and lower-polluting systems brings their cost down, making them more accessible to more people. Combine these actions with the ones in [“Clothing”](#) and [“Sealing and Insulating your Indoor Space”](#) for the greatest energy savings and emissions reduction.

Household action: A particularly efficient and effective electrically powered HVAC system is an air source heat pump. Heat pumps use refrigerants to both heat and cool. ([Learn about how they work and the various types available.](#)) Select a system that’s appropriate for your space. The website linked above has more information on how to choose.

If you can’t replace your heating system right now or it’s not yours to replace, install a programmable thermostat ([National Grid offers a rebate](#)) and work with sun, shade and airflow. In winter, let the sun shine in; in summer, close the shades. In hot weather, open windows at night and close them during the day; open opposite windows to create cross-breezes. These strategies can improve your comfort with no increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

Community action: On days with extreme temperatures, spend leisure time or time when you’re doing portable tasks like paperwork outside your home, in comfortable public places like libraries or rec centers, or businesses like movie theaters, coffee shops or malls. This is a way to meet your neighbors, too. Your town may have [cooling centers](#) for particularly hot days, and it’s good to know where those are.