

Is your refrigerator running? Some interesting info and fascinating fridge energy tips

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4/3/2009 - **VANCE AIR FORCE BASE, Oklahoma** -- It's an old joke - is your refrigerator running? Well, you better go catch it.

But the amount of money saved by running a newer, more energy-efficient refrigerator is no laughing matter.

Generally, the refrigerator is the largest electricity-consuming appliance in the kitchen.

"Old refrigerators can be real energy hogs," said James E. Stamper, base energy manager. "Replacing an old fridge with a newer, more energy efficient model can save enough energy in one year to light the average household for nearly four months."

Look for the Energy Star label for significant savings when replacing appliances. Refrigerator costs each year for a home with a 10-year-old refrigerator total on average \$200. Going with a new Energy Star refrigerator brings that cost down to around \$50 - provided the old refrigerator is no longer used, of course.

"Eventually, all the older refrigerators will die off, thereby reducing energy costs," said Mr. Stamper. "But anyone can help that process along simply by thinking of the money saved with a new fridge vs. the cost, and then replacing the old one."

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, there are more than 47 million fridges more than 10 years old in the U.S. A new, nationwide effort has begun, encouraging every American who owns an old, inefficient refrigerator to save money, energy and the environment by recycling that old fridge. And if a replacement unit is needed, savings are available when buying a new Energy Star-qualified refrigerator. Visit www.recyclemyoldfridge.com for more information.

According to Mr. Stamper, if replacement is not an option at this time, there are ways to ensure getting the most efficiency from the old appliance:

1. Make sure the door closes securely. There is a rubber-like seal around the door that can be tested by closing the door on a dollar bill. See how easy it is to pull out. If the dollar slides out easily, the door is probably leaking moist hot air into the refrigerator then having to cool it. Re-sealing the fridge door is definitely one way to keep cold air inside the fridge where it belongs.

2. Every couple of months, vacuum lint and dust, and remove debris from the coils on the back and bottom of the refrigerator. This makes the transfer of heat from inside the refrigerator to the outside easier for any refrigerator.

3. Another simple step to save energy is to move the refrigerator away from the stove and dishwasher and keep it away from direct sunlight. Also, the refrigerant coils in the back of the refrigerator should have some space away from the wall, and on top of the unit, so the air that is pulling heat out of the refrigerator has a place to escape instead of heating the space around the refrigerator.



There are more than 47 million fridges more than 10 years old in the U.S. These old fridges each cost on average an extra \$150 per year to use. That's more than \$7 billion dollars wasted annually in energy costs. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Brian Hill)

4. When replacing burned-out light bulbs, use the manufacturer-recommended lamp size. Compact fluorescent lamps are normally not good for this application due to the low temperature. Use a CF suitable for outdoor use.

Ask yourself - is your refrigerator running... as efficiently as possible?