Keeping Cool without Stressing the Planet

Why we care
It's HOT out there! The triple-digit weather of July’s West Coast heat wave resulted in utility customers consuming power at record levels. Nationally, air conditioners consume 43% of the peak power load on hot afternoons. Aside from increasing demand on the power grid, air conditioners typically use HCFC-22, a refrigerant that is damaging to the ozone layer. Fortunately, there are ways to keep cool without stressing the planet.

Simple, positive change
- Install a ceiling fan to create breezes. Electricity use is small—like that of a light bulb.
- Open windows during the cool part of the day and seal off the house during the hottest times. Close draperies or shades on windows that are exposed to sun.
- Save heat-producing tasks such as showering, cooking, and doing laundry for cooler parts of the day.
- Upgrade insulation, weather stripping, and calking help keep out the summer heat.
- Shade your home with awnings, louvers, trees, or install solar shade film on windows. Shading can reduce indoor temperatures by as much as 20 degrees.
- Consider a whole-house fan or 2-stage evaporative cooler, which are more energy efficient than a central air conditioner.
- If you have an air conditioner, use it in combination with a fan to lessen its workload, and set the temperature above 78° when away from home.
- If you do purchase an air conditioner, look for Energy Star models and R410 refrigerant, which is less damaging to the ozone layer. High efficiency models qualify for tax credits.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.