

Save energy and beat summer heat

**Toronto Hydro says new energy-saving gadget already a hit
Incentives available to help cool home**

on those hot days

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SPECIAL TO THE STAR

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When the lights go out because of an overloaded electrical system, we all suffer, especially during the dog days of summer. This year, homeowners in Toronto can help ensure power keeps flowing by joining in Keep Cool, a program by Toronto Hydro, Home Depot and the Clean Air Foundation to reduce consumption whenever the grid is in danger of being overloaded.

As part of the program, Toronto Hydro is offering homeowners a nifty little gadget called the peakSAVER. A free, wireless device that attaches to a central outdoor air conditioner and uses a signal not unlike that found in pager technology, peakSAVER allows the utility to reduce the cycling of residential or commercial central air conditioners by about 50 per cent, and to turn off electric water heaters and swimming pool pumps.

Reducing individual electricity use during critical periods lessens both the possibility of blackouts and the need to buy costly imported electricity, says Peter Sissaris, demand response project manager for Toronto Hydro. For consumers, he says, the effect of the peakSAVER will be barely noticeable, perhaps a one or two-degree change in temperature.

Sissaris says the newly launched program is already a hit with homeowners. "Our target was to have 10,000 people signed up by the end of June, but we already have over 13,000."

Sissaris expects that up to 50,000 Torontonians will have installed a peakSAVER by the end of the program and estimates it could save about 80 megawatts of power. But he stresses that the program doesn't mean consumers can forget about conservation. "People still have to be sensible. That means doing other things, like closing blinds and windows to contain the coolness on very hot days."

There is no cost to the homeowner for the device or for the installation, which takes about 20 minutes. Right now, Home Depot has a promotion in which those who enrol at a participating store in Toronto will receive a \$25 Home Depot gift card. Homeowners can also arrange for installation through Toronto Hydro by calling 1-877-487-8574. As an incentive, those folks will get a \$25 cheque from Toronto Hydro.

Home Depot is also offering customers a \$25 gift card when they bring an old window air conditioning unit into any participating store on weekends between June 10 and June 25. (If you're thinking about buying a new air conditioner, choose an Energy Star product, which can use up to 70 per cent less electricity than old models.)

To further increase energy efficiency, homeowners may use their gift card to offset the cost of a ceiling fan, which can reduce air temperature by 13C, says Linda Snow, vice-president of Wilcorp Fans. "They will also make air conditioning work more efficiently because they circulate the cool air."

The peakSAVER program is only available to homeowners in Toronto. But Sissaris says that other municipalities will be on board soon. In the meantime, those living outside the city can still take advantage of rebate programs offered by the Ontario Power Authority. For more information, go to <http://www.conservationbureau.on.ca>.

For more tips on energy conservation, readers can also go to <http://www.torontohydro.com>, click on

Residential Customers under the Electricity Services box, then click on "Energy Saving Tips" under the "Looking for" box on the right-hand side of the screen.

Correction: The selling price given for the GOTCHA grabber by Royal International Tools last week was incorrect. The grabber sells for \$19.95 and should be in Canadian Tire stores this weekend.

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