

10 tips for optimising your business' energy use this summer

Submitted by: Team Energy

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In the last few years, the U.K. has experienced some of the hottest summers on record. In July 2022 we experienced a brief, but unprecedented, extreme heatwave with the temperature reaching 40.3°C.

The Met Office has predicted that 2023 will be even hotter than previous years, and one of the warmest on record with temperatures predicted to rise by between 1.08C and 1.32C . In light of this, TEAM's Energy Consultant, Georgina Wisby, has compiled 10 tips to help you optimise your organisation's energy use this summer. Not only will this ensure the comfort of your employees, but also the reduction of your energy spend and carbon emissions. The best part is that each of these changes can be implemented with minimum investment.

As temperatures rise, it is tempting to rely on your building's air conditioning unit as a 'fix-all' approach, however there are other, more cost-effective methods to stay cool this summer.

To keep temperatures low and your energy bills even lower, we have compiled our top 10 tips to help keep your energy use to a minimum.

1. Reduce exposure to the sun

Now this one may seem like an obvious one, but keeping blinds drawn at peak-heat hours is essential to keeping your building cool. Although those sunbeams may look beautiful when they light up the room, they are also creating a greenhouse effect that is making your air conditioning system work twice as hard. If your office blinds are not effective at blocking out the sun, you could also consider using window films which can cut out solar heat gains by as much as 85-90%.

2. If you aren't using it, unplug it

In an office full of electronic equipment, it is no wonder that it can get so hot. All electronics, from laptops to coffee machines, generate heat. To keep things cool in the office, ensure that any electronics not in use are unplugged and/or set to go into energy saving mode automatically during intervals of low use.

3. Upgrade to LEDs

Is your organisation still running on incandescent bulbs? Not only are they extremely inefficient, but they are also producing heat. Only 10 to 15% of the electricity that they use gets turned into light, whilst the remaining 85% is converted into heat. LED lights are currently the most energy efficient bulbs on the market; they use 75% less energy and last 25 times longer.

4. Turn off the light

If you are not quite ready to upgrade your entire lighting system to LEDs this summer, you could try simply turning the lights off (where it is safe and practical to do so). With an average of 16 hours of daylight per day in summer you can rely more on natural light and turn off the lights in unoccupied rooms. Additionally as employees tend to take more annual leave during the summer, offices are not as crowded and meetings are usually not as frequent, which means you can keep those lights off.

5. Use your space more efficiently

As mentioned in the previous point, a larger proportion of employees take annual leave in the summer. This could mean that occupation levels within the office are lower than usual. Make the most of this and avoid cooling the entire building. With less staff, there will be less rooms in use. Make sure to turn off air conditioning systems in unpopulated working spaces to save on cooling costs and emissions.

6. Make the most of natural airflow

If possible, try to establish an airflow in the office. This can be done by opening windows at opposite ends of the room to increase the effectiveness of natural cooling. If you do need to open the windows, remember to switch off your air conditioning so you are not using energy when it is not needed.

7. Close windows and doors

If it is simply too hot outside to have the windows open and you are forced to rely on the air conditioning, ensure that windows and doors are shut to allow for effective cooling. Air conditioning relies on having a sealed space to cool, so if the air temperature is constantly changing due to open doors and windows, the air conditioning system must work a lot harder to maintain a consistent temperature. This should also apply to all external doors. External doors should stay shut when air conditioning systems are on, and if they are operated by automatic motion sensors, consider adjusting the settings to limit the time that they are open, or better still turn it off and allow manual opening and closing.

8. Efficient air conditioning systems

Ideally a system maintenance, clean, and check should take place once a year to ensure that your air conditioning unit is working efficiently, however a TM44 inspection (<https://www.teamenergy.com/consultancy/energy-certificates/tm44-air-conditioning-inspection/>) is legally required every 5 years. Ensure that your certificate is up to date to avoid being fined £300. Not only is it a legal requirement, but a TM44 inspection will provide your organisation with a recommendation report which can improve the energy efficiency of your air conditioning systems, reduce the carbon emissions produced from running your system and reduce your system operating costs.

9. Dress for the weather

With the normalisation of hybrid working post Covid, many organisations have relaxed their office dress code to allow staff to feel more comfortable. Clothing such as formal suits and office wear can be uncomfortable during the summer months, so ensuring that this is not a requirement can allow employees to dress for the weather. If, however, relaxing the office dress code is not an option at your organisation, you could consider introducing a temporary dress code for periods of unusual, adverse weather to allow for periods of flexibility.

10. Use desk fans mindfully

Desk fans can be a great tool for keeping staff cool during summer and they can take some of the pressure off the air conditioning system, especially if an individual is struggling with the heat more than others. Be mindful however of the fact that fans are a consumer of energy and are easily left on at the end of the day as employees leave the office. It is important for your employees to feel comfortable at work, even with adverse weather conditions and therefore, to make the most out of a desk fan, staff should ensure that they are switched off before they leave the office at the end of the day.

If another summer heatwave hits the U.K. this year, with these 10 tips your organisation will be equipped with the knowledge on how to stay cool and energy efficient.

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Notes to Editors

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