

An Efficient Refrigerator is a Happy Refrigerator

You know me. I'm always looking for ways to be more energy efficient. It's one of my passions. It's why I like to promote myself as a "green" Realtor.

I also like to share this information, especially when it comes to ways homeowners can reduce their energy bills.

So, here are some ways to make your household refrigerators as efficient as possible. For best efficiency:

1) Keep your freezer full. An empty freezer requires significantly more energy to cool. If your freezer is empty or mostly empty and you don't want to fill it with food, fill it with containers of water. Those frozen water containers can also come in quite handy in the event of a power outage.

2) Keep your refrigerator and freezer at the proper temperatures. The U.S. Food and Drug Administrations recommends that refrigerators be kept at below 40 degrees and freezers at 0 degrees. Colder temperatures waste energy. In fact, energy use can increase by as much as 25 percent if your temperatures are just 9 degrees colder than the recommended levels.

If your refrigerator has a dial instead of temperatures, the recommended temperatures usually correspond to a medium setting.

An added note for those infrequent power outages: Keeping your refrigerator and freezer doors closed will help preserve your food. For refrigerators, the food will stay cold for about four hours. Meanwhile, a full freezer will keep an adequate temperature for up to 48 hours if the door remains closed.

3) Perform regular maintenance. That means removing dust that has built up on the refrigerator coils. Depending on your refrigerator's model, the condenser coils will be located behind, on top of or underneath the fridge. If you remove the

grill at the bottom front of the refrigerator, you'll have easier access to the coils if they are located underneath the unit. Note: Even though these coils act as a magnet for dust, not all refrigerators have coils in a location that you can be cleaned by the consumer.

4) Make sure the refrigerator's seals are in good shape. The door seal needs to be snug around the entire door so that the cool, refrigerated air remains in the unit. Cracked or damaged seals should be replaced.

5) Make sure there are at least 3 inches of air space between the back of the refrigerator and the wall, and at least 1 inch of space on both sides. This allows for good air circulation.