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Tucson, AZ 11:00 am 2:00 pm

79°

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Local agency helps people pay bills

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Posted: May 16, 2012 9:24 PM
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By Chris Holmstrom - email

It's that time of year again when hot and dry weather sweeps through Southern Arizona causing triple degree temperatures and its keeping air conditioning companies busy.

"We have a large maintained base of customers, customers who like to do preventive maintenance to try and prevent those costly summer repairs," said Wade Hamstra, General Manager of Hamstra Heating & Cooling.

Hamstra says getting you're AC unit maintained twice a year can help extend the life of the unit and prevent break downs saving you thousands of dollars. He says its also important to change your air filters once a month.

"There's so many people that unfortunately miss that and it leads to a lot of problems in the system. It's a very simple thing, inexpensive thing that can save people a lot of money."

But the costs don't stop there because as summer kicks in utility bills can double. Experts say if you change your thermostat throughout the day you want to make sure to stay within 5 degrees.

"If you feel comfortable at 75 while you are home then allow your thermostat to go up to 80 degrees while you are not at home. Any more than that it becomes a wash as far as the efficiency goes."

Rosemary Cora Cruz works for the Pima County Community Action Agency and says the office is extremely busy during the summer time. She says many people come in to get help on their utility bill.

Cora Cruz says if your family is having trouble paying bills the first thing you need to do is contact your utility company and apply for an extension or a discount. The next step would be to contact the Pima County Community Action Agency or the Tucson Urban League, and the Salvation Army, all agencies that have funding and can pay for the bill or part of the bill.

She says the city of Tucson and Pima County get about \$3.5 million a year to help out families. But with recent federal budget cuts our area is getting about 30-40% less making it tougher for families to qualify for the assistance.

"If at all possible conserve and that's not always easy to do. You know do laundry, do dishes, do things that cause either electricity or water during hours that are off peak if at all possible," said Cora Cruz.

To learn more about the utility assistance program, click on the following link.

<http://www.azcaa.org/>

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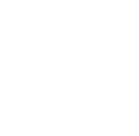
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