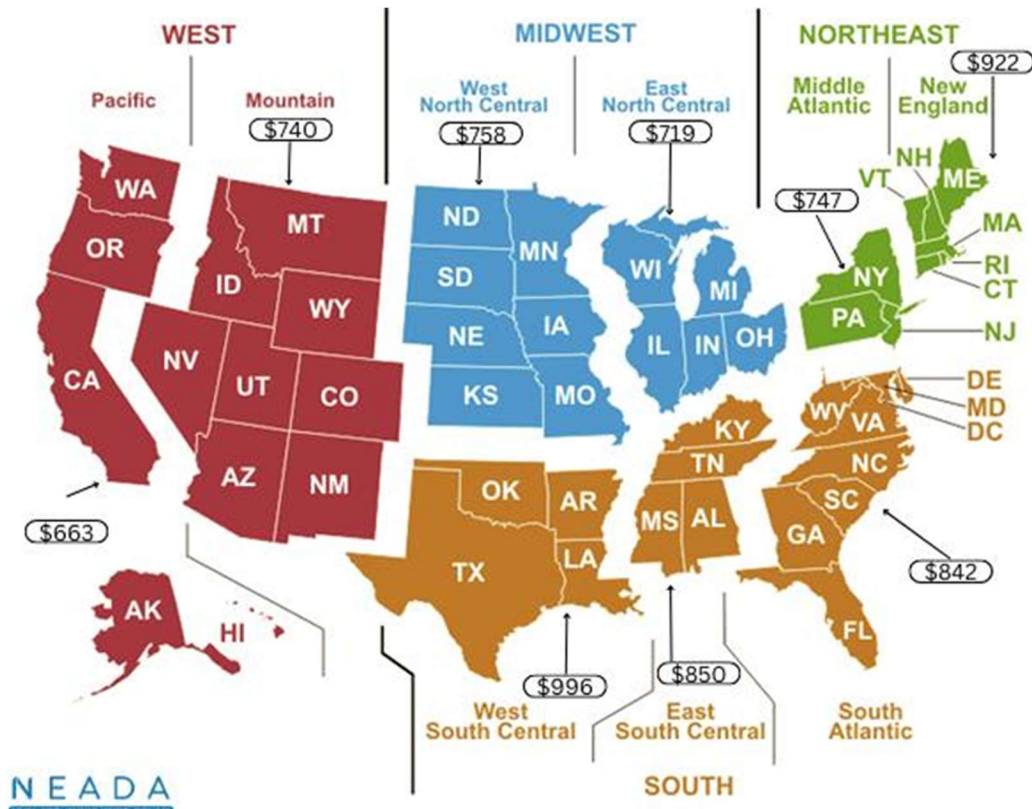


Staying Cool This Summer: Highest Cost Levels in Over 12 Years

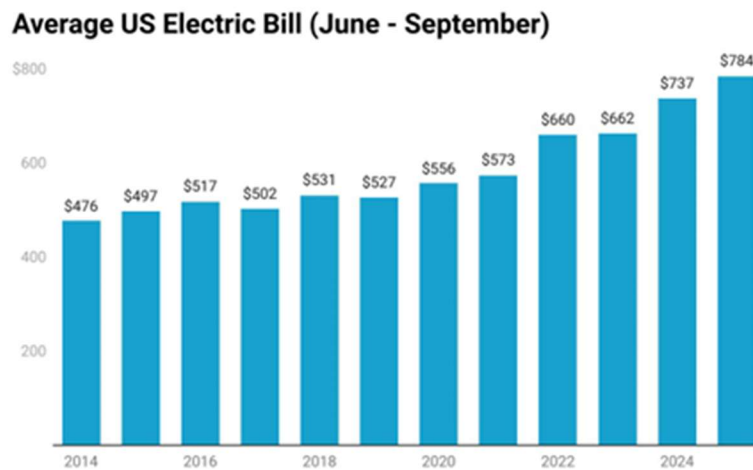
The heat of summertime is upon us. The cost of not having sufficient cooling can be detrimental to a person's health and is often believed to be undercounted for in relation to various health issues and even death. Not being able to stay cool can bring on heat exhaustion, heat strokes, heart attacks, and even respiratory issues. While one might open a window on a moderately hot day in an attempt to cool down a house with no mechanical air conditioning, this can work against those with no mechanical interior cooling system in extreme and prolonged heat conditions. Staying cool is more than a slogan, it can be the difference between life and death.

Fortunately, Virginia is one of about 26 states that have protections for consumers regarding summer electrical shut offs due to lack of payment. Nearly 1 in 6 U.S. households was already behind on energy bills before the summer began, with total debt reaching approximately \$25 billion. However, winter is a different story as Virginia offers no cut-off protection during the heating season. This may be in part due to the continued warming of the earth. Average high temperatures continue to climb and more recently we have endured some of the hottest summers on record. So, if you are facing electric service cut-off, please reach out to your electric provider early and find out what they can do to help keep your cooling equipment powered through September.



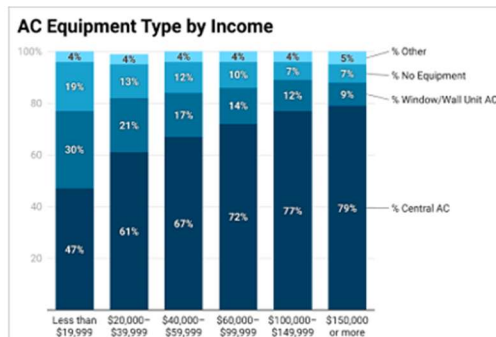
The cost of staying cool continues to climb and is expected to rise again this summer and may reach as high as \$860 on average for the June through September cooling periods. Adjusted for inflation, the increase will be about 8.5 percent over last year's prices. This also means about a 37% surge since 2020. Retail electricity prices continue to climb faster than general inflation. So yes, some will have even higher costs and typically this is found in lower income households where air sealing and insulation may not be adequate or have any at all. For that, the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) may be of benefit to low-income households that qualify. Contact your local weatherization provider for more details. CVACL is a provider of WAP for the local counties of Amherst, Appomattox, and Bedford. If you live in Campbell County or the city of Lynchburg, please reach out to Lynchburg Community Action Group (LynCAG). The cost of electricity continues to rise due to increasing production costs, climbing faster than the rate of inflation. The second factor is continued climate change that lead to the need for additional energy for indoor air cooling.

Figure 2: Average Electric Bill from June to September in the United States



Source: EIA - Created with Datawrapper

The figure below shows that almost 20% of Very Low-Income Families have no Air Conditioning. This is a reality for many who have health issues as well.



Source: EIA RECS - Created with Datawrapper

Federal cuts to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) program will complicate matters even more for low-income households. In addition to the health vulnerabilities, the LIHEAP budget is shrinking by nearly a third from \$6.1 billion in FY23 to \$4.1 billion for FY25. These cuts will not stop increasing utility costs and rising prices nor will they lower the cost of cooling equipment. Families will have to make difficult decisions as to how to stay cool during the summer season this year. LIHEAP needs additional funding; it's that simple. Please reach out to your federal level government representatives and tell them to increase funding for LIHEAP. Some states have asked Congress to increase funding for LIHEAP to \$6 billion in FY26 plus \$1 billion for the program's contingency fund, for a total of \$7 billion. But your support may make the difference as to whether this gets approved.

NASA has provided data that shows 2024 as being the hottest month on record. The trend doesn't end there, however. NOAA is predicting that summer 2025 will likely be another hotter than average season and this could lead to more records being broken. Heat waves are no longer a localized problem; they have spread globally with no end in sight.

Low-income households will continue to bear the brunt of hot summers, both through costs which on average is about 8.6% of low-income household budgets versus approximately 3% of non-low income budgets. This will result in at least 35% of low-income households to not be able to pay their utility bill for at least one of the four months while the national average for not paying at least one month is down around 16%.

CVACL is happy to offer a limited cooling resource program to those in our communities (Region 2000), to receive additional cooling in the form of either a window air conditioner or a fan. This is an age and income qualifying program and is sponsored by Dominion Energy. The window air conditioners we offer are Energy Star rated meaning they will be some of the most energy-efficient units available in their size. We also have some privately donated funds that can be used to purchase and install an air conditioning unit. Please reach out to CVACL Housing Department for further information and an application. This is a first come, first served basis and funding is limited.

Sources: chrome-extension://efaidnbnmnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://neada.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/SummerEnergyOutlookReport-2025-FinalA-4.pdf

NEADA – National Energy Assistance Directors Association

CEPC – Center for Energy Poverty and Climate

Price estimates were calculated by NEADA, based on NOAA temperature data and EIA electric usage and price data. Regions demonstrated in Figure 1.

<https://neada.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/SummerEnergyOutlookReport-2025-FinalA-4.pdf>

Census Pulse Survey 2024