

## Fact Sheet 4

# Preparing your home for hot weather



## Residential Efficiency Scorecard

The Scorecard is a home energy rating program.

An accredited assessor will visit your home, look at the building features and fixed appliances, and generate a certificate showing an energy star rating, hot weather rating and appliance efficiency ratings.

Your Scorecard assessor will give you advice on how to make your home more comfortable and energy efficient, so you can keep energy costs down.

To find out more about the Scorecard or to request an assessment, visit [www.victorianenergysaver.vic.gov.au/scorecard](http://www.victorianenergysaver.vic.gov.au/scorecard).

## How can Scorecard help you prepare for heatwaves?

Figuring out how to keep your home cool can be complicated, and professional advice about what to do can really help. The Scorecard is the only home rating program that includes a hot weather rating on a scale of 1 to 5, developed to help Victorians manage heatwave conditions more safely.

A home with a low hot weather rating is relatively hard to keep cool without using cooling appliances. A Scorecard assessment will give you advice on how to help your home perform better in hot weather without artificial cooling. A high-rated home stays cool when the power goes out. When the power is on, the home uses less electricity, reducing energy bills and producing less strain on the energy system on hot days.

## Why you need to keep cool

Exposure to excessive heat can cause significant harm, particularly for some higher risk groups.

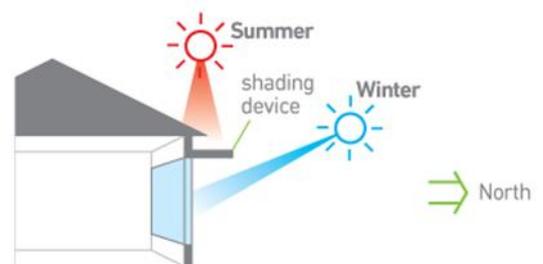
If your home ever gets above 26 degrees inside, you should consider taking action, as there is evidence this can impact on your health.

## What you need to know

- Stop the sunshine from hitting your house, particularly your windows: it's one of the most effective ways you can keep your house cool. Heat travels through windows, even when they're closed, as well as the roof and walls.
- Keeping your home cool will most likely take a combination of smart behaviour, simple changes and bigger home upgrades.

## Top 3 ways to heat-proof your home

### 1. Protect your windows from heat



### SHADE NORTH FACING WINDOWS

*Image: Sustainability Victoria*

Windows – the glass and the frames – let heat from outside into your home. Shutters or external blinds on windows hit by the sun can make your home more comfortable in hot weather, especially if they keep the sun off the windows all day. Deciduous plants can block summer sunlight on a window and let it through in

winter. Low-cost temporary shading, like matchstick blinds hung outside the window, can also work well.

Curtains and other internal window coverings don't work as well as external blinds, but do help keep heat out. Your aim is to create a still air space between the covering and the window, trapping the heat. Heavy, lined, floor-length curtains with pelmets, honeycomb blinds or Roman blinds work best, but any thick curtains will help.

## 2. Improve your ceiling insulation

It is relatively easy and cheap to get insulation installed if your ceiling space is accessible. This job is best done by a professional installer. Use insulation with a minimum value of R3.5. Cover as much of the ceiling as possible – even a small uninsulated area will let hot air in. If your ceiling is already insulated, you can put more insulation on top.

## 3. Seal gaps and cracks

Gaps and cracks let heat into your home from outside. They are often hard to find, but simple and cheap to fix. Air can get in around windows and doors and under skirting boards. Exhaust fans let in a lot of hot air, and in older homes, wall or ceiling vents can be the culprit. Your Scorecard assessor will help you find hidden gaps and suggest the most cost-effective ways to seal them.

## Longer-term heat fixes

If you're planning renovations, even small ones, it's a great time to think about how you can make your home more resistant to hot summers.

### Insulate your walls

Heat travels through walls, and insulation slows the heat down. Walls are difficult to insulate, so it's best to do it while you are renovating. If you need to replace the lining or cladding of any walls, install insulation at the same time.

### Incorporate thermal mass

Talk to your Scorecard assessor about renovations, and about how 'thermal mass' (bricks, tiles and concrete) in the right place can help keep your house cool.

## Upgrade your windows

Windows let a lot of heat into your home on hot days, particularly if you have no way of shading them from the outside. Glass and frames, particularly metal frames, both conduct heat. Double glazing will not prevent heat entering your house if the sun directly hits the glass.

Deciding whether to replace windows is a complex matter, with a lot of factors to consider. A Scorecard assessor can help you figure out what kind of window and frame solutions will make the most sense for you.

## Some simple ways to stay cool without upgrading your home

- Keep doors closed between the hotter and cooler parts of your home, and spend as much time as possible in the cooler parts. Your Scorecard assessor can help you identify which parts of your house are easiest to keep cool.
- Keep the sun off windows and west facing walls.
- Use fans before turning on the air conditioning as fans are cheaper to run.
- When it's cooler outside than inside, open windows and doors – this will usually be at night or early in the morning before a hot day. Use an indoor/ outdoor thermometer to check when it is time to open the house.
- Avoid using the oven and stove on hot days – have a barbecue outside if you can or use the microwave. Clothes dryers can pump a lot of hot air into a room, so dry clothes in the sun. Halogen lights also generate heat, so switch them off (and replace them with LEDs when you can).
- Only cool the room you're in, not the whole house, to keep energy use down. Clean the filters regularly to improve efficiency. If you have ducted cooling, get the ducts cleaned and insulated so they don't leak cool air. If you're buying a new cooling device, look for one with lots of stars – it will be more energy efficient and cost less to run.