

- **Power filtering devices**—These devices may filter electromagnetic field, radio frequency or harmonics. These **filters have no impact on electric consumption** for residential or small commercial customers. Harmonic filters can provide some benefits to larger commercial and industrial customers, but these filters must be part of an integrated facilities plan to control harmonics in a plant distribution system.

- **Beware of sales pitches** through unsolicited letters and phone calls that promise to save energy and big bucks by offering you an energy audit. Sometimes these companies find “problems” with your home and then use a hard sales pitch to sell you a product or service they claim will fix the problem. Or they may say you have to act immediately to get a federal rebate or tax credit that is only available through them.

**The UC offers FREE energy audits (from a licensed State of Florida Energy Rater), with no sales pitch.** And the UC will never call you to initiate an energy audit. Customers must take the first step by signing up. Check with the UC if you have any questions. Even if the offer is legitimate, read all the fine print before you sign anything. If there are legitimate energy conservation issues in your home, it is important to get more than one quote for the work.

- **There are no free lunches!** Some devices claim to create energy through mysterious means. Be highly skeptical—the laws of physics cannot be broken. Do your research before you buy.

### What are my options for finding quality, unbiased information?

There are several unbiased sources of information. Here are some examples:

Consumer Reports— <http://www.greenerchoices.org>

Better Business Bureau—  
<http://centralflorida.bbb.org>

FL Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services— <http://www.freshfromflorida.com/>

To learn more useful ways to save:  
Energy Information Center—  
<http://www.eere.energy.gov/>

ENERGYSTAR®—<http://www.energystar.gov>

Energy and water saving measures—  
<http://www.ucnsb.org>

**For more information about the Utilities Commission, visit [www.ucnsb.org](http://www.ucnsb.org).**



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# KEEP GREEN IN YOUR POCKET AND YOUR HOME.

**Beware that some so-called “energy-saving” products and services may not live up to their claims.**

**Protect yourself from possible rip-offs.**



## WHY SHOULD I CARE?

As consumers pay more attention to energy costs and place an emphasis on “green” living, it is important to **be careful with new devices and services** appearing in the marketplace. Some have value and others do not. You might lose money on purchases of some alleged energy-saving devices. You may not get the service that you are paying for. Some products or services in the marketplace may not work or the savings may be exaggerated. In some cases the device or technology may be misapplied.

## WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW TO AVOID BECOMING A VICTIM?

**Get a second quote.** Vendors can make it sound like they are the only ones who have a particular product or service. Most likely, this isn't true. And **prices can vary significantly from vendor to vendor.** If it sounds too good to be true, proceed with much caution. Look for independent third-party validation such as *Consumer Reports* testing and product reviews as well as university and government agency reports. Vendor-supplied testimonial letters tend to be biased in favor of the vendor and application proposed. Frequently, valid technical concerns and product limitations go unmentioned in testimonial letters.

## WHAT PRODUCTS AND SERVICES SHOULD I BE WARY OF?

- **Exaggerated Refund Claims** – Be wary of vendors who say they are the only one who can get you a refund from the

UC. This is not true. **No refund from the Utilities Commission is tied to a particular vendor.** All customers who meet eligibility requirements can receive a rebate. Watch out to make sure a vendor does not put the UC refund in the price equation for the product or service you are buying. Sometimes, this is done to make it appear the money is a savings coming to you through the vendor, when it is not. **UC refunds are issued directly to UC customers as a credit on their utility account.**

- **Transient Voltage Surge Protection (TVSP)**—Surge protection is important to protect electronics from damage from surges caused by lightning or equipment being switched on and off. The type of voltage surges these devices protect from lasts a few milliseconds and any incidental savings which may occur would be insignificant. **Surge protectors are protective devices, not energy-saving devices.**
- **“Black box device”** is a phrase used to describe a range of products that tout some new proprietary technology to save energy. Often, these devices target motors and may claim to condition, filter or control your appliance motor to reduce energy consumption. Frequently, you plug your appliance into the device or wire it in front of the motor to get the desired results. Be aware that these devices may void the warranty on your appliance. A qualified electrical engineer can provide guidance on this

type of device. As a sales technique, the **“black box” approach allows vendors to avoid answering technical questions and concerns about the product application.** Frequently, the black box devices use old, widely distributed technology. Worse yet, some have no inherent value and may waste energy or damage equipment.

- **Power factor (PF) correction**—Power factor correction devices typically use capacitors to reduce line current. **Sometimes vendors try to give the impression that reducing current by perhaps 10-20 percent or more will lead to the same reduction in utility bills. This is not true.** Most electrical devices require energy to be temporarily stored in magnetic and electric fields. This energy is only stored and then returned to the utility. It is not used and, since utilities only charge customers for the power that they actually use, there is no bill reduction from improvements to the power factor. Generally, only large industrial customers with large inductive or capacitive loads are metered and billed for having poor power factors.
- **“Insulating” paints**—Makers of these paints often claim very large radiant heat reduction, but do not address convection or conductive heat gain or loss. Generally, heat rejection from walls is a small percentage of the heat transfer in a home, **so savings tend to be small to moderate in nature.**