Just the Facts About ...

Winter Heating Tips

EnergyWise Homes

Stay Warm

We're in for a cold winter, but you can keep frosty weather outside. Use these energy saving tips to stay warm and comfy in your home while keeping your heating costs down.

Save Money

The average family will spend over $1,300. on utility bills this year. About half of that will go to heating and cooling the home. The rest is spent on water heating, refrigeration, lighting, cooking and appliances. You can reduce your energy bills by ten to fifty percent by using a few inexpensive energy-saving measures.

Think Comfort

Comfort tip number one: Keep drafts out! A small leak around a door or window can be the equivalent, in terms of air flow, to removing a brick from the side of your house and letting the wind blow through. Seal those gaps and keep winter winds on the outside.

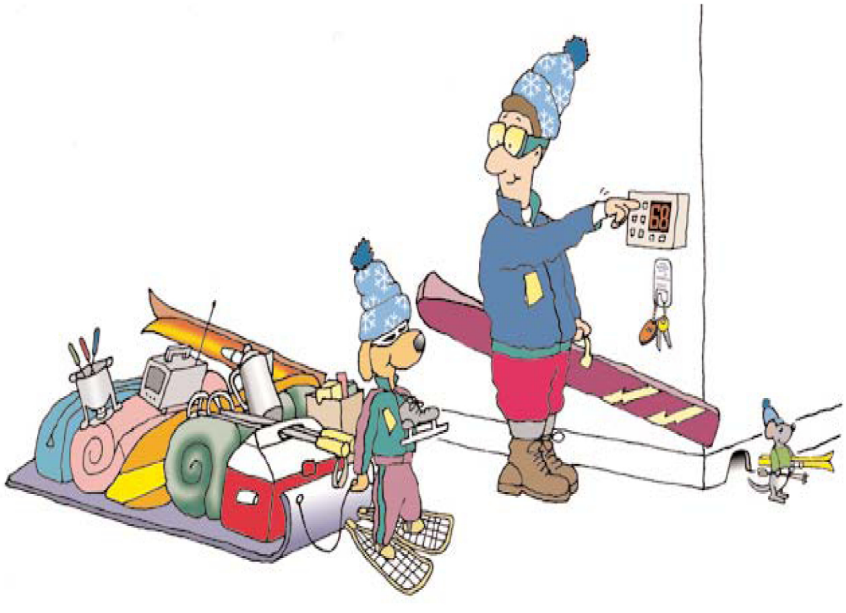
Make sure all your doors and windows shut tightly. Check for leaks, and replace old weather stripping or caulk. To find out where cold air is seeping into your home, light a stick of incense and carry it around the house. Hold it up to window frames, door sills, electrical boxes, plumbing fixtures, electrical outlets, ceiling fixtures, attic hatches, and any possible air path to the outside. Watch the smoke to see where air leaks are occurring. This trick works best on a windy day.

Your best investment of the year could be a simple caulking gun, which costs less than ten dollars. By sealing all the gaps around doors and windows, your foundation, and places where pipes pass through the walls, you can save a bundle on your heating bill this winter.

Thermostats

Instead of unbundling from all your many layers when you come indoors, try keeping your house at a temperature where you will feel comfortable with a sweater on.

Keep your thermostat set to 70 degrees, or lower, during the day. Set your thermostat to lower temperatures at night, or when you are not at



home. 65 to 69 degrees is comfortable for most people at night. Try reducing the temperature to 55 or 60 when you are away from the house for more than a few hours. A five degree reduction in temperature setting for an eight hour time period can save you up to twelve percent on your energy bill.

If you have a programmable thermostat, set it to reduce the temperature while you are away at work, and to reduce it a little less while you are asleep at night.

If your thermostat is not programmable, put a little hook in the wall beside it. Hang you keys on the hook, and that will help you remember to turn down the temperature when you leave the house. You'll also always be able to find your keys.

Windows

If you want to make single glazed windows function like new double pane glass, you can provide and inexpensive "second pane" by covering the inside with tight fitting plastic sheeting. Window kits are available at discount or hardware stores. Make sure you do your caulking to seal any air leaks around the windows first.

Window Shades

Use your window shades and drapes to maximum benefit. Keep shades closed at night to conserve heat. During the day, open shades on sunny windows to take advantage of passive solar heating. It also helps to keep south facing windows as clean as possible.

You can use Venetian blinds or mini blinds to block out the cold while still letting light in. Think of the cold air as a heavy liquid flowing down off your window panes. Angle your blinds to block the flow by tilting the slats at a 45 degree angle to the window glass.

Heavy drapes or quilted roman shades make great winter window coverings. If they cover an area larger than the window itself, they are also adding insulation value to your walls.

Humidify Your Home

Add humidity. Humid air feels warmer than dry air. Increasing the humidity of your home also helps you resist winter colds and moisturizes dry skin. Operating a room humidifier will make you feel more comfortable. If your heating system has a humidifier, make sure that it's functioning properly.

You can also add humidity by keeping house plants. Plants clean the air and add moisture to it at the same time. Putting trays of water on top of radiators also helps. So does leaving the bathroom door open after a shower, to let that warm steamy air circulate through the house.

Heat Zones

If you're not using a room, don't heat it. Close off vents to rooms that are infrequently used, and shut the door. When you do need to use the room, just open the vent for the time you are in there and keep your sweater on. [Note: Don't try shutting vents if you use a heat pump as this could harm your heat pump.]

Ventilating Fans

Don't overuse kitchen or bathroom ventilating fans. Turn them off as soon as they have done their job, or put them on timers to limit their operation to fifteen minutes at a time. A fan can draw out an entire houseful of heated air in about an hour.

Heating System

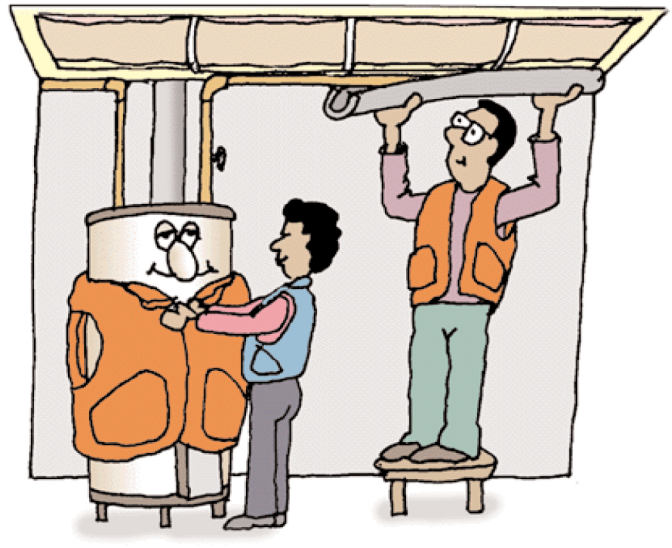
Keep your furnace air filter clean, clean, clean. A dirty or clogged filter can make your furnace and fan work harder, which costs you more. You'll be warmer for less money, and breathe easier, if you clean or replace your furnace filter often. Check the filter at least once a month, and more often if you have a lot of dust. Make sure it gets cleaned or replaced at least twice this winter.

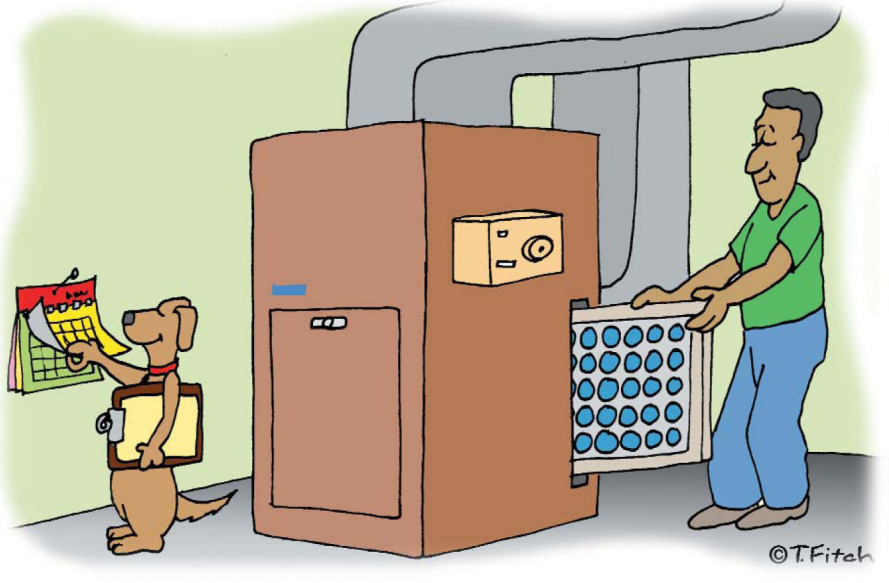
Keep registers or radiators dust and clutter free. Make sure that they are not blocked by furniture, drapes or carpeting.

If your home has radiators, make a trip from room to room bleeding trapped air from each radiator as you go. You can also increase the amount of heat that goes into a room by placing a heat-resistant radiator reflector behind the radiator, between the radiator and the exterior wall.

Check air ducts in your attic or basement. Make sure that there are no leaks, and that the ducts are well insulated. You can seal leaks with duct tape, but make sure that it is UL (Underwriters Laboratory) approved. You may want to seek professional help for making major repairs to ducts or installing insulation.

Keep in mind that heating and cooling systems in the United States emit about half a billion tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere each year. By following these energy saving tips, you are helping to reduce the effects of global climate change.



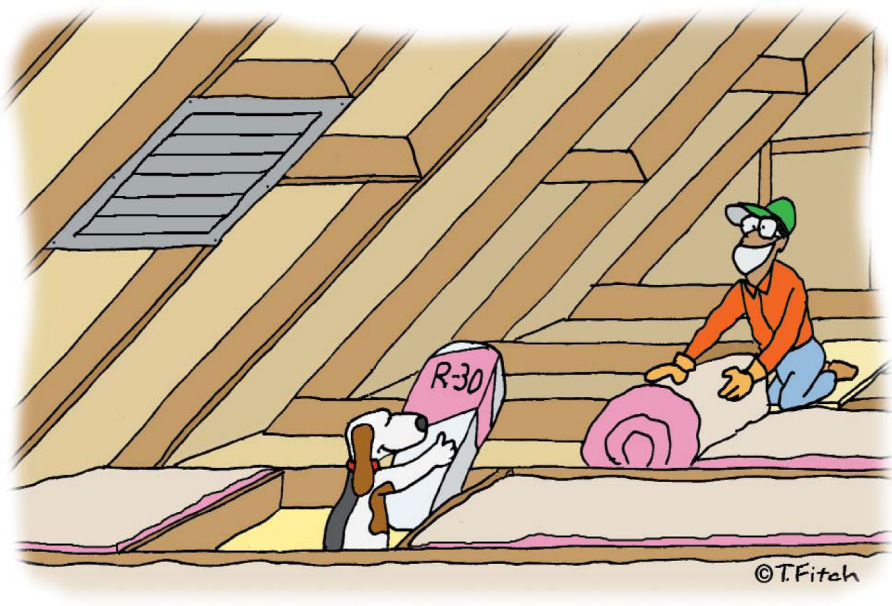


Hot Water

Warm water feels wonderful, but it can be costing you more than you think. A typical household spends 14 percent of their energy bill, or about $200 a year on hot water. About half of this is used to wash your body (showers and baths), and about a fourth is used to wash your clothes.

You can reduce your water heating costs by using less hot water. Do this by installing low flow showerheads and fixing leaky faucets. When doing laundry, try using warm or cold rather than hot water, and try to wash one large load rather than several small ones. If you use a dishwasher, you can reduce the amount of hot water used by scraping, instead of rinsing dishes before you load them into the dishwasher. Make sure you dishwasher is full, but not overloaded, and avoid using the "rinse hold" option.

When shopping for a new washing machine or dishwasher, look for the Energy Star label. Energy Star prod-



ucts are certified by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to use less energy than other products, cost less to operate and help protect the environment.

You an also save energy by reducing the temperature in your water heater. If the water coming out of your tap can burn you, it is far too hot for safety and for most household needs. Try setting the thermostat on your water heater to 115 degrees.

You can save money by making sure that your water heater and pipes are well insulated. Ready made kits are available at hardware stores and building supply stores. Be careful not to cover the thermostat. If you have a gas or oil water heater, be careful not to cover the water heater's top, bottom, thermostat, or burner compartment. Consider heating your water with solar energy. Solar water heaters can be great investments, even in our cold climate. Call or look for our factsheet on *Solar Hot Water*.

Attic Insulation

Much of the heat escaping homes is lost through the attic. Be sure to close off any attic vents or fans during the winter and check on how well the attic is insulated. You should have at least nine inches of fiberglass batting to achieve the minimum recommended R-30 value for our area. A local study found that increasing the level of insulation from 2-3 inches (R5) to 8 - 14 inches (R30) can save 95 to 145 dollars per year for every 1,200 square feet of ceiling area. Lay batts or blankets between joists or trusses with the vapor barrier facing your living space. You can add additional insulation without a vapor barrier over existing insulation, if needed.

Fireplaces

Make sure your heat isn't going out the chimney. If you have a fireplace, remember to close the damper tightly when it's not in use. Having the damper open is just like having a full sized window wide open all winter long. Shut outside vents too. If you never use your fireplace, plug and seal the chimney flue.

When you are using a fireplace, keep in mind that while it seems cozy and warm, it is not an efficient source of heat for your house. The heat in your home goes right up the chimney with the smoke. To minimize this, close the doors to the room with the fireplace, and lower the thermostat or turn off heaters. If your fireplace has dampers in the bottom of the firebox, make sure that they are open, so that the fire will use outside air rather that the warm air from your home. If you don't have an outside air source for the fire, open the nearest window about an inch while the fire is burning.

You can greatly improve the efficiency of your fireplace by installing tempered glass doors and a heat-air exchange system that blows warmed air back into the room.

Free Booklet

You can order a free 34 page guide to saving energy in your home by calling the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Clearinghouse (EREC) at: 1.800.363.3732. Ask for a free copy of *Energy Savers: Tips on Saving Energy & Money at Home*. The booklet covers a wide range of topics including insulation, energy efficient appliances, windows, landscaping and weatherization.

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