

ENERGY EFFICIENCY TIPS: Winterizing Your Home



Soaring costs and tight supplies of heating oil and natural gas coupled with predictions of colder-than-normal temperatures in parts of the country mean it will cost significantly more to heat your home this winter. Here are some energy-efficient tips to help reduce high winter energy bills:

- 1. Install a programmable or setback thermostat that “remembers” for you to lower the temperature during the day.
- 2. Test your home for air leaks. You can save 10 percent or more on your energy bill by reducing the air leaks in your home.
- 3. On a windy day, hold a lit candle next to windows, doors, electrical outlets and light fixtures. If the smoke travels horizontally, you have found an air leak that may need caulking, sealing or weather-stripping.
- 4. Turn off everything not in use. This includes lights, TVs, VCRs, CD and DVD players, computers.
- 5. Heating can account for almost half of the average family’s winter bill. A heat pump can trim the amount of electricity you use for heating by as much as 30 to 40 percent.
- 6. Replace loose shingles and ensure that the flashing around the chimney or vent pipes is watertight.
- 7. Use kitchen, bath and other ventilating fans wisely. In just one hour, these fans can pull out a houseful of warmed air.

THREE OVERLOOKED SOURCES OF HEAT LOSS ❄️

ATTIC STAIRS.

Often a gap can be observed around the perimeter of the door. Try this yourself: at night, turn on the attic light and shut the attic stairway door. Do you see any light coming through? These gaps add up to a large opening where your heated/cooled air leaks out 24 hours a day. A low-cost solution is to add an attic stair cover, which provides an air seal, reducing the air leaks.

FIREPLACES.

Researchers have studied fireplaces to determine the amount of heat loss through a fireplace. A recent study showed that for many consumers, their heating bills may be more than \$500 higher per winter due to the air leakage and wasted energy caused by fireplaces. The reason is because hot air rises. An easy solution is to add a fireplace draftstopper, which is an inflatable pillow that seals the damper, eliminating any air leaks. Remember to remove the pillow when using the fireplace, and then reinsert after.

CLOTHES DRYER EXHAUST DUCTS.

In many homes, the room with the clothes dryer is the coldest room in the house. Your clothes dryer is connected to an exhaust duct that is open to the outdoors. Cold air leaks in through the duct, through your dryer and into your house. An easy, low-cost solution is to add a dryer vent seal. This will reduce unwanted air infiltration, and keep out pests, bees and rodents as well. The vent will remain closed unless the dryer is in use. When the dryer is in use, a floating shuttle rises to allow warm air, lint and moisture to escape.

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