



Energy-Saving Solutions for Your Home

Even before Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit, heating oil and natural gas were predicted to reach record highs this winter. The damage these storms did to our energy infrastructure means that your heating and electricity bills will be higher this winter than ever before. Luckily, there are steps you can take in your home to lower your heating and electricity bills.

To find out how you can save energy to lower your energy bills, visit the Department of Energy's Energy Star program – www.energystar.gov – which provides step by step guidelines on how to weatherize your home along with information about where to find energy efficient appliances. The Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance Program – www.eere.energy.gov/weatherization/ – also provides advice and resources on steps to save energy. Your state may also offer weatherization and energy saving assistance – www.eere.energy.gov/weatherization/state_contacts.html

Start Saving Money & Energy Right Now

Here are twelve quick tips to help you save money and energy this winter.

Smarter Lighting: A Bright Idea

One of the easiest and cheapest places to start saving energy is with lighting.

Tip #1 – Replace your most frequently used incandescent bulbs with compact fluorescent lights.

Compact fluorescent light bulbs use only a third as much electricity as a standard incandescent bulb. Because a compact fluorescent will usually last ten times as long as a regular bulb, which means it is will easily pay for itself. If every household in the U.S. replaced one light bulb with a compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL), it would prevent enough pollution to equal the removal of one million cars from the road.

Tip #2 – Replace outdoor lighting with a motion-detector equipped bulb or fixture.

Outdoor lights that are left on all night can add unnecessary waste energy and disturb wildlife. You can safely and efficiently light the outside of your home by installing light fixtures that are activated by motion sensor or a timer. These devices will keep areas well lit when you need them to be while reducing your energy bill

Hot Water shouldn't be a drain on your wallet.

Over 10% of your energy bill goes to heating water for your dishwasher, shower, and faucets. You can cut this energy use, and your energy bill, by implementing these easy steps.

Tip #3 – Lower your hot water heater to 120 degrees and drain any sediment.

Though you need to keep your water heater above 120 degrees to prevent bacteria from building up, many hot water heaters are set too high. Draining some water a few times a year reduces sediment and increases efficiency.

Tip #4 – Add insulation to your hot-water heater.

The standard hot water heater is on all the time, adding extra insulation will save more energy than you think. Most hardware stores sell pre-made insulator "jackets" that can be easily wrapped around one's water heater. Adding insulation to your water heater and any exposed pipes can knock up to 15 percent off the costs of heating water.

Tip #5 – Install a low-flow shower head.

Low-flow shower heads are also a worthwhile investment (especially for renters, because you can take them with you) that will reduce the amount of hot water you use and hence the energy needed to heat it.

Heat your home – Not the planet.

Heating and cooling your home is the single largest expense on your energy bills. But taking steps to weatherize your home, you can make keeping your home a comfortable temperature easier and cheaper.

Tip #6 – Check for and seal any cracks or gaps.

Heating one's home is the single largest use of energy for the average customer. Tiny gaps and cracks in an older home are roughly equivalent to a one-foot square hole punched in your wall, which means that sealing gaps with caulking and weather stripping makes a big difference in keeping the heat inside your home and saves you money.

Tip #7 – Tighten Windows and Loosen Your Budget

If all windows were as efficient as the best products now widely available in the marketplace, the average household would save \$150 a year, and reduce its carbon dioxide emissions by about 4,300 pounds per year. A cheaper and easier method than replacing windows is to insulate your windows during the colder months with transparent film that keeps the heat in and the cold out.

Tip #8 – Heating Ducts: Keep the air flowing

If just one in ten households used current technology to upgrade their inefficient heating systems, we could keep 17 billion pounds of pollution out of the air. You can also save money and cut pollution by having your heating vents and ducts cleaned regularly, and having your furnace serviced.

Tip # 9 – Sweaters are in this season, so lower your thermostat!

Besides insulation, you can make a big difference in your heating bill by keeping your home at a slightly lower temperature. Lowering your thermostat one degree can cut as much as 10% of your heating bill.

Appliances and Electronics

Tip # 10 – Replace old appliances with more efficient models.

Though buying a new appliance isn't cheap, replacing an old appliance, like a refrigerator, washing machine, or furnace -- with a new, energy-efficient model can significantly cut your energy bill. Look for the Energy Star label as a minimum; some models can be even more efficient. And though buying a new appliance is a major investment, many states and utility companies offer substantial credits or other incentives to replace an outdated appliance with a more efficient one.

Tip # 11 – Defrost your Freezer

The frost and ice that builds up in your freezer over time does more than make it hard to get to your ice cream – it also causes your freezer to work harder to keep the freezer at a cold temperature. By routinely defrosting your freezer, you can keep your ice cream cold and the planet cool.

Tip # 12 – Clean Clothes, Cool Planet

Modern washing machines and detergents can clean clothes effectively in cold water – which means you don't have to waste energy by using hot water. Another way you can save energy in your washer-dryer and your dishwasher is to always wash full loads.