



Tips for Reducing Home Heating and Cooling Costs

Division of Energy fact sheet

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Homeowners can significantly reduce their utility bills by making simple home improvements, as described below. For more tips, visit the U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Savers Web site at www.energysavers.gov.

Keeping Out the Elements

- Caulk and weatherstrip doors and windows that leak air.
- Caulk and seal air leaks where ducting, plumbing, light fixtures or electrical wiring penetrate through exterior walls, floors and ceilings.
- Install foam gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on exterior walls.
- Install exterior or interior storm windows over single-pane windows or replace them with double-pane windows. Storm windows as much as double the R-value of single-pane windows and they can help reduce drafts, water condensation, and frost formation. The R-value reflects how well a material resists heat flow. The higher the R-value, the greater the resistance to heat loss or gain.
- As a less costly and less permanent alternative, you can use a heavy-duty, clear plastic sheet on a frame or tape clear plastic film to the inside of your window frames during the cold winter months. Remember, the plastic must be sealed tightly to the frame to help reduce infiltration.
- Install tight-fitting, insulating window shades on windows that feel drafty after weatherizing.
- During cold-weather months, keep the draperies and shades on your south-facing windows open during the day to allow sunlight to enter your home. Keep these draperies and shades closed at night to reduce the chill you may feel from cold windows. In warm-weather months, keep the window coverings closed during the day to prevent solar gain.
- Upgrade insulation levels to at least an R-38 in the attic, R-19 in the walls, and R-19 in the floor (if located over a crawl space or unconditioned space).
- **WARNING:** Prior to reducing the air infiltration of a home, all gas burning appliances need to be checked for proper burner operation and the furnace heat exchanger needs to be tested for leaks. Failure to do so may cause elevated carbon monoxide levels in the home.

Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning

- For gas appliances, look for blue flames; yellow flames indicate the gas is burning inefficiently and an adjustment may be needed. Consult your manufacturer or your local utility.
- Set the thermostat to cooler temperatures in the winter and warmer settings in the summer when the home is unoccupied or when occupants are sleeping. (Setback may not be appropriate with heat pumps. Check with the equipment supplier or your service company).
- Clean registers, baseboard heaters and radiators as needed; make sure they're not blocked by furniture, carpeting or drapes.

- Replace or clean furnace air filter(s) once a month. Have your furnace serviced before each heating season to ensure it is operating safely and efficiently.
- Keep your fireplace damper closed tightly when not in use.
- Insulate and seal ducts located in unconditioned areas such as attics and crawl spaces.
- When replacing your heating or air conditioning system, water heater or other appliances, consider ENERGY STAR® -labeled equipment.

Water

- Repair leaky faucets promptly; a leaky faucet wastes gallons of water in a short period.
- Install water-saving showerheads and faucet aerators.
- Lower the thermostat on your water heater to 120 degrees.
- Wrap your water heater with an insulated jacket. On electric water heaters be careful not to cover the thermostat. On gas water heaters be careful not to cover the water heater's top, bottom, thermostat, or burner compartment; when in doubt, get professional help.
- Add water pipe insulative wrap to the first six feet of the hot and cold water lines as they come off the water heater. However, be careful to not install the pipe wrap within three inches of any appliance exhaust flues.

Lighting

- Turn off the lights in any room you're not using.
- Install compact fluorescent bulbs in place of existing incandescent bulbs when operation is more than two hours per day.
- Use task lighting; instead of brightly lighting an entire room, focus the light where you need it, such as a desktop or kitchen counter.
- Take advantage of daylight by using light-colored, loose-weave curtains on your windows to allow daylight to penetrate the room while preserving privacy.

Appliances

- Make sure your appliances are properly maintained. Refer to the manufacturer's user's manual for proper operation and maximum energy savings.
- Move your refrigerator out from the wall and vacuum its condenser coils once a year. Your refrigerator will run for shorter periods with clean coils.
- Don't keep your refrigerator or freezer too cold. Recommended temperatures are 37° to 40°F for the fresh food compartment of the refrigerator and 5°F for the freezer section. If you have a separate freezer for long-term storage, it should be kept at 0°F.
- Look for the ENERGY STAR and EnergyGuide labels. ENERGY STAR is a program of the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designed to help consumers identify energy-efficient appliances and products.
- When not in use, turn off televisions, stereos and computers. ENERGY STAR-labeled computers come with power management features that "power down" after a user-specified period of inactivity.
- Plug home electronics, such as TVs and DVD players, into power strips and turn power strips off when equipment is not in use.

For More Information Contact

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