

Money for Life

November 2006

Dear Readers,

The average Iowa family spends more than half of its annual household energy bill on heating and cooling. You can dramatically reduce these costs—up to 30 percent, according to the U.S. Department of Energy—by making some simple energy-saving weatherization and insulation improvements to your home. This month's newsletter focuses on tips from the D.O.E. to make your home more energy-efficient this winter.

General Tips

A wide variety of technologies are available for heating your home, and they achieve a wide range of efficiencies in converting their energy sources into useful heat for your home. When looking for ways to save energy in your home, be sure to think about not only improving your existing heating system, but also consider the energy efficiency of the supporting equipment and the possibility of either adding supplementary sources of heating or simply replacing your system altogether.



ENERGYSTAR labeled products provide significant energy savings. Find retailers near you at www.energystar.gov/ when you're ready to replace your heating and

cooling systems. Getting the proper size and a quality installation is essential to getting the most from your new equipment. If the unit is too large for your home, you will be less comfortable and might actually have higher utility bills. Oversized equipment will operate in short run cycles, not allowing the unit to reach efficient operation and remove humidity from the air — resulting in an uncomfortable home.

Other energy-saving tips:

- Clean warm-air registers, baseboard heaters, and radiators as needed; make sure they're not blocked by furniture, carpeting, or drapes.

- Clean or replace filters on furnaces once a month or as needed, especially during high use months. A dirty filter will slow down air flow and make the system work harder to keep you warm — wasting energy. A clean filter will also prevent dust and dirt from building up in the system — leading to expensive maintenance and/or early system failure
- Turn off kitchen, bath, and other ventilating fans within 20 minutes after you are done cooking or bathing to retain heated air.
- Install a programmable thermostat that can adjust the temperature according to your schedule. Through proper use of pre-programmed settings, a programmable thermostat can save you about \$100 every year in energy costs.
- Programming your thermostat from 72 degrees to 65 degrees for eight hours a day while no one is home, or while everyone is tucked in bed, can cut your heating bill up to 10 percent, paying for the cost of a basic unit in less than a year.
- Keep windows on the south side of your house clean to let in the winter sun.
- Close your curtains and shades at night; open them during the day.

Insulation & Air Sealing

You can reduce your home's heating costs through proper insulation and air sealing techniques. These techniques will also make your home more comfortable.

- Conduct an energy audit of your home to find air leaks and to check for the proper level of insulation. Common sources of air leaks include cracks around windows and doors, gaps along baseboard, mail chutes, cracks in brick, siding, stucco or foundation, or where any external



lines (phone, cable, electric, and gas) enter the home.

- Plug air leaks with caulking, sealing, or weather stripping to save 10 percent or more on your energy bill.
- Install storm windows over single-pane windows or replace them with ENERGY STAR windows to reduce heat loss from air leakage, and reflect heat back into the room during the winter months to save even more energy. In cold climates, ENERGY STAR windows can reduce your heating bills by 30 to 40 percent compared to uncoated, single-pane windows, according to the Efficient Windows Collaborative. While it may take many years for new windows to pay off in energy savings, the benefits of added comfort and improved aesthetics and functionality may make the investment worth it to you.
- Install tight-fitting, insulating window shades on windows that feel drafty after weatherizing.
- 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 if drafts, water condensation, or frost are present. Remember, the plastic must be sealed tightly to the frame to help reduce infiltration.
- Adequate insulation in your attic, ceilings, exterior and basement walls, floors, and crawlspaces can save you up to 30 percent on home energy bills.
- Insulate heating ducts in unheated areas such as attics and crawlspaces and keep them in good repair to prevent heat loss of up to 60 percent at the registers. Focus first on

sealing ducts that run through the attic, crawlspace, unheated basement, or garage.

- Close fireplace dampers when not in use. A chimney is designed for smoke to escape, so until you close it, warm air escapes.

For more information on making your home more energy efficient for the winter, contact your local ISUE county Extension office for the free “Home Series” publications from the Iowa Energy Center.

Titles include:

- Home Tightening, Insulation and Ventilation
- Home Heating and Cooling
- Water Heaters
- Major Appliances (Available March 2007)

Copies of the publications can also be found on their website at www.energy.iastate.edu/.

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... and justice for all

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