

INSIDE GRUNDY COUNTY
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The recent warm weather has been good for crops and outdoor activities. However, we know it will not last. Before it turns really cold, you may want to check around your house and see if there are steps you can take to reduce your energy needs for this heating season.

Energy loss occurs when air and heat leak through cracks and holes that exist in walls, ceilings, around doors, windows and foundations. The following steps can be taken to reduce heat loss: first, caulk, weather-strip, or glaze windows and doors to fill cracks or voids in an effort to tighten up the house. Next, reduce heat loss through windows and doors by using storm windows and doors. As homes are tightened, moisture may become a problem so take steps to control moisture. Lastly, check the insulation in your ceilings, exterior walls, and basement walls, crawl spaces or slab foundations. Add insulation as needed. ISU publication Pm-789 can guide you through this process.

One of the most cost-effective energy-saving investments you can make is to install a programmable thermostat which automatically coordinates indoor climates with your daily and weekend patterns; thereby increasing your home comfort while reducing your energy bills. The best part is you don't have to remember to change thermostat settings.

Clean or replace furnace and air conditioner filters monthly. Make sure your furnace and air conditioning equipment is properly maintained with a professional tune-up. Let nature do its work and allow the sun to help heat your home on winter days by keeping blinds or drapes of sun exposed windows open in the daytime and closed at night to conserve heat. Close all unoccupied areas and reduce heat. Close the damper on fireplaces when not in use. Close blinds or shades on the south and west facing windows of the house during summer days or install shading devices and/or plant vines and trees.

Replace your most used light bulbs with ENERGY STAR compact fluorescent bulbs to save money each year in energy costs. These light bulbs use two-thirds less energy and last up to ten times longer. Use dimmers, timers, and motion detectors on indoor and outdoor lighting. Consider safer, more efficient ENERGY STAR torchiere lamps over popular halogen torchiere lamps, which can cause fires, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. While relatively inexpensive to purchase, they are expensive to operate.

When buying new products, look for the ENERGY STAR® label, found on more than forty different products such as TVs, furnaces, cell phones, refrigerators, air conditioners and more.

Take five minute showers instead of baths to reduce hot water use. Use ceiling and other fans for better circulation and additional cooling. Turn off everything not in use: lights, TVs, computers, electronics.

For additional suggestions, check out the Iowa Energy Center website:

<http://www.energy.iastate.edu/efficiency/residential/> or call the Grundy office of ISU Extension at 319-824-6979.