

KEEPING WARM AND SAVING ENERGY THIS WINTER



It's cold again (really cold), which means we're all looking for ways to save on energy costs. From the high-tech to the practical, here are some ways to make this winter an energy-saving (and money-saving) opportunity!

Follow these tips and enjoy low energy costs from the warmth of your home:

1. Install weather-stripping, caulk leaky doors, and seal your home. If you're able, adding insulation to your walls and attic is another key way to keep that precious heated air from escaping.
2. Turn down the heat! Lower your thermostat before leaving the house for extended periods. Using a programmable thermostat is a great way to effortlessly adjust the temperature based on your schedule.

3. Change the filter on your furnace once a month so your furnace can breathe easy.
4. If you have a fireplace, make sure the damper is closed when not in use.
5. Turn down the temperature of your water heater to the warm setting (120°F). You'll not only save energy, you'll avoid scalding your hands.
6. Use power strips to minimize the number of devices you have to turn off or unplug when not in use.
7. Use energy-efficient LED and CFL bulbs instead of incandescents (see our guide to learn more).
8. Don't forget to recycle your old lights! You can find a recycling drop off locations here.

Make an energy-saving New Year's resolution

Thinking you want to do more and learn about ways to save energy at home from the experts? Then a great New Year's resolution could be getting an advanced energy audit.



Many people assume there is little they can do to significantly reduce their energy use and increase the efficiency of their homes. In reality, there are many things that typical residents can do themselves and many other things they can hire others to do. The Minnesota Department of Commerce strongly recommends having an advanced home energy assessment, or home energy audit, before embarking on home energy improvements or remodeling.

An assessment of how your house is functioning can help you decide what needs fixing, upgrading, or replacing. It will identify some simple low-cost measures you can take, such as weather-stripping doors or installing high efficiency light bulbs, and it will determine more expensive but cost-effective measures, such as adding insulation to attics or walls and replacing furnaces or water heaters.

Energy audits will vary by price and the level of detail and types of tests provided.

The most comprehensive energy assessment would include the following:

- A review of energy bills to help assess home performance and identify opportunities for savings.
- A blower-door test to determine air leakage.
- Infrared scans of walls, attic, and foundation to assess insulation levels and locate sources of air leaks.

- Efficiency and safety testing for combustion appliances (furnaces, boilers, gas fireplaces, and water heaters) to ensure they are operating properly and not contributing to indoor air concerns.
- A visual inspection for attic, wall, crawlspace, foundation, basement, window, door, and roof problems.

Contact your gas or electric utility to arrange an energy assessment. Neighborhood energy groups often partner with utilities to deliver energy audits. For instance, the Neighborhood Energy Connection works with Xcel Energy to perform audits, and the Center for Energy and Environment partners with Xcel Energy and CenterPoint Energy to provide a service called Home Energy Squad Enhanced.

Source: <http://www.cleanenergyresourceteams.org/blog/keeping-warm-and-saving-money-winter-its-easy>