

Greening the Holidays



As temperatures plummet during the winter months, many families struggle to keep up with increased energy costs. To combat these costs, and to help the environment, practicing energy conservation is the fastest, simplest and cheapest way to cut costs and make sure your family keeps warm this winter. Outlined below are a few simple, low-cost or no-cost steps to take to winterize your home and gain energy savings.

Conduct an energy audit

Find the nooks and crannies that may be releasing warm air from your home. Air leaks around windows, doors, and water pipes may cause a great amount of energy loss in your home. Add caulk or weatherstripping to seal leaks around windows and doors, and make sure water pipes, attics and crawl spaces are adequately insulated. You can also cover windows with clear plastic sheets to help prevent air loss or drafts. Tight-fitting curtains or drapes may also help prevent drafts. Your utility company may offer a low-cost energy audit for your home, or you can hire a private contractor. For more information on energy audits, visit: <http://www.energysavers.gov>

Pull out the sweaters

This year, bundle up in cozy sweaters and layer clothing rather than turning up the thermostat. Leaving your thermostat on 68 degrees during winter months can help lower your energy costs by 10 percent. Turn it down even further when it's time to cook dinner; heat from the oven can make up the difference.

Check the fireplace

Heat may be lost through fireplaces that are not in use. Make sure to keep the damper closed when the fireplace is not in use and close off non-functioning fireplaces with insulation to prevent energy loss. An open fireplace is like an open window in your home.

Be smart with appliances

When not in use, unplug your electronic appliances. Many appliances continue to consume energy even when not in use. If you are replacing appliances or buying electronics as gifts, check for the ENERGY STAR logo. ENERGY STAR appliances use less energy with the same performance. To learn more about ENERGY STAR appliances go to <http://www.energystar.gov>

Use the sun

During the day, pull back the drapes of south-facing windows to allow the sun to warm your home. Close them in the evenings to reduce drafts.

Make the holidays bright with LED lights

Use LED lights this holiday season to decrease the cost of decorating your home. Also, put holiday lights on a timer or only plug them in when hosting guests or during times when your family is home. Find manufacturers and brands of ENERGY STAR®-qualified decorative light strings at http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=dls.pr_dls.

Adjust water heater settings

Water heaters use nearly 25 percent of the energy consumed in homes. You can reduce this cost by turning your water heater down to a medium setting, which can also help prevent scalded hands!

Maintain heating systems

It's important to schedule a regular check-up for your heating system. Have your heating systems serviced regularly to make sure its function is up to par. For information on what maintenance your heating system requires visit: http://www.energysavers.gov/your_home/space_heating_coling



Get cash back for home improvements

For an energy evaluation and rebates on efficiency improvements to your home visit KYHomePerformance.org.



The Kentucky Department of Energy Development and Independence (DEDI) is an ENERGY STAR partner. For more information on DEDI, go to www.energy.ky.gov.

For more information on energy-saving tips, please visit: http://www.energysavers.gov/seasonal/tips_winter.html

