



Fight the Frost this Winter: ENERGY STAR [®] Offers Tips to Keep Warm, Save Energy and Help the Environment

Improve your home's comfort and save energy and money while doing the right thing for the environment. By using energy efficiently in your home, you can make a difference by preventing air pollution from power plants. Follow these simple recommendations from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency:

1. **Know the Facts** – The average family spends \$1,400 a year on energy bills, with nearly half of that spent on heating and cooling. Energy-efficient heating and cooling equipment, sized and installed correctly, with properly sealed ducts, can save homeowners as much as 20 percent on their annual energy costs.
2. **Keep it Clean** – A dirty air filter can increase your energy costs and lead to early equipment failure. Clean or change the air filter in your heating and cooling system monthly. Some filters only need to be changed every 3 months. Also, have your equipment checked seasonally to make sure it's operating efficiently and safely – check-ups can identify problems early. Dirt and neglect are the #1 causes of system failure.
3. **Bundle Up Your Home** – Hidden gaps and cracks in a home can add up to as much airflow as an open window. The more heat that escapes, the more cold air enters, causing your system to work harder and use more energy. Home Sealing can improve your home “envelope” – the outer walls, ceiling, windows and floors -- and can save up to 10 percent in energy costs. Start by sealing air leaks and adding insulation—pay special attention to your attic and basement, where the biggest gaps and cracks are often found. If replacing windows, choose ENERGY STAR qualified ones.
4. **Tighten Your Ducts** – If you have a forced air furnace or heat pump, then a duct system is responsible for circulating warm air throughout your home. Leaky ducts can reduce your system's overall efficiency by 20 percent. Sealing your ducts can save up to \$140 annually on energy bills and help you consistently heat every room.
5. **Don't Oversize** – If you're replacing old equipment, make sure your new equipment is properly sized for your home -- bigger isn't always better. An oversized system will cost more to buy and operate and will cycle on and off too frequently, reducing your comfort and leading to early system failures and repair costs. Correct size and proper airflow will ensure that your equipment works efficiently, saves you money, and helps protect our environment.
6. **Put Your Home to the Test** – Doing a home improvement project this fall or winter? ENERGY STAR has online tools to evaluate your home's energy performance and offer solutions to increase comfort and energy efficiency. Visit www.energystar.gov/homeimprovement. Have your utility bills handy for savings calculations.
7. **Consult a Professional** – Find an experienced, licensed contractor before embarking on any heating and cooling overhaul. Visit www.natex.org to find a contractor whose technicians are certified by NATE (North American Technician Excellence), the leading industry-supported testing and certification program. Your contractor should properly size your equipment, test airflow, and perform a quality installation.
8. **Cash in on Special Offers** – Concerned about the cost of new heating equipment? Check with your local utility or visit the rebate finder at www.energystar.gov/rebatefinder to see if there are any special deals on high efficiency heating equipment. Manufacturer rebates are usually offered in fall and early spring. Ask for ENERGY STAR qualified equipment – it might cost more up front, but will offer you greater savings and comfort for years to come.
9. **Shop Smart** – If your heating equipment has been poorly maintained and is 15 years or older, it's probably time for a more efficient replacement. Ask for an ENERGY STAR when buying the following equipment:
 - ❖ **Furnaces** – One in four furnaces in U.S. homes is more than 20 years old. Old furnaces cost more to operate per year than new, ENERGY STAR qualified models that are 15 percent more efficient than standard models.
 - ❖ **Heat Pumps** – Today's electric and geothermal heat pumps are much more efficient than those installed just 10 years ago. When installed in a home with a well-sealed home envelope, heat pumps will provide great value and comfort for your energy dollar. An ENERGY STAR qualified geothermal heat pump is 30 percent more efficient than comparable new equipment and can save you as much as \$200 annually. A qualified electric heat pump is 20 percent more efficient and can save you about \$130 annually.
 - ❖ **Boilers** – An ENERGY STAR qualified boiler uses features like electric ignition and new combustion technologies that extract more heat from the same amount of fuel, to be 7 percent more energy-efficient.
 - ❖ **Programmable Thermostats** – Regulate your home's temperature with four programmable settings and you can save about \$100 annually on your energy bills.