

Making Your Home More Comfortable: Money Saving, Environment Saving Solutions

What a waste. This year tens of millions of dollars will be spent beating the great outdoors. Millions of dollars will be sent, literally, out the window and up the chimney. It won't be the wasters who suffer. We all do. Every cubic foot of natural gas and gallon of heating oil that's wasted damages our environment unnecessarily. We don't fully understand the effects of adding carbon dioxide and other combustion by-products to our atmosphere, but we do know this: a few simple steps can reduce the amount of energy we use and make us more comfortable in our homes besides. Here's what you can do:

END THE DRAFTS

When air leaks around your windows and doors, you lose your money. Your house feels drafty. Your furnace works harder than it should. Spend a Saturday caulking and weather stripping your windows and doors. You'll be well paid for the time and money you invest every time you receive the electric bill in the mail.

BATTS IN YOUR BELFRY (OR AT LEAST IN YOUR CRAWL SPACE)

Insulation batts, that is. Your attic, sidewalls and crawl spaces should all be adequately insulated. You can install it yourself or hire a contractor to do it for you. Either way, you'll notice an improvement in comfort right away and be money ahead in the long run. An interesting side benefit: fiberglass insulation is a very good sound insulator, too. So while it keeps the heat in, it keeps the outside noises out and dampens kitchen and bathroom noise inside the house, too.

INVISIBLE PROTECTIVE SHIELDS

Well, almost invisible. We're talking about storm windows and storm doors, those transparent weather barriers that really reduce heat loss. These days there are other options, too, like double and triple glazed windows. Your contractor or window dealer can tell you more.

A TIP FROM YOUR CAT

Even on the coldest winter day, the sun still packs plenty of energy punch. Just look where your cat likes to nap, and take a hint. Opening the drapes to the sun on a bright winter day can do a lot to help warm your home. Closing them at night can hold heat in. In both cases you'll be well paid in energy savings for a few seconds of work (as well as giving your cat a few more places to stretch out).

WARM UP YOUR FURNACE

It keeps you warm all winter, doesn't it? Return the favor by giving it what it needs. An annual check-up to make sure it's operating safely and up to the limits of its efficiency. Fresh, clean furnace filters at regular intervals, so it doesn't have to blow harder than it should. Maybe a kind word now and then. Proper maintenance means comfort and safety for you and your family.

OUT OF MY HOUSE YOU ENERGY GLUTTON

When it comes to old furnaces, sometimes it's better to be cruel than to be kind. If it's more than seven years old, your furnace is like a car with a manual choke in a world of computer- controlled fuel injection. New furnaces recapture heat that your old furnace sends up the chimney in the form of steam. They condense the steam to hot water and use the energy thus recaptured to help heat your home. So while an eight year- old furnace might convert 60% of the energy in the natural gas or oil you buy into heat, today's condensing furnaces turn over 90% of that energy into warmth for your family. If you're curious what those numbers mean to your bank account, take the test on the previous page and work it out for yourself. You'll be able to see whether your old furnace deserves the cold shoulder!

We all want a better environment, inside and out. It's nice to know that making yourself more comfortable this winter benefits us all. And that our children, and their children, will benefit, too.