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# WATT'S UP?



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## Preparing for the upcoming heating season

I've just scheduled my annual maintenance check-up for our furnace. I've finally accepted that this year's warm and sunny summer days are really behind us. Cold winter days lie ahead.

In the last few newsletters, we've shared some important energy saving tips to help you lower your overall energy costs. Now, to assist you in preparing for the coming heating season, we've compiled a list of simple home maintenance actions that are proven "winter winners" in reducing heating costs. These have been culled from a variety of energy-efficiency related sources, including ENERGY STAR (<http://www.energystar.gov/>) and Flex Your Power (<http://www.fypower.org/>), the state of California's cutting-edge energy efficiency awareness campaign.



Remember to follow any manufacturer instructions when you use this checklist.

### Radiators and Heating Vents

1. Place a sheet of aluminum foil between the radiator and the wall to reflect heat back into the room.
2. Keep radiators and heating vents dust-free.
3. Don't block radiators and heating vents with furniture or draperies.
4. Make sure radiator and heating vent dampers are fully open.
5. Close radiator dampers and doors for rooms you don't use.

### Fireplace

1. Have your chimney cleaned and inspected.
2. Make sure fireplace dampers and doors are tight-fitting and tightly closed when not in use. This can prevent up to 8% of heat from being lost up the chimney.<sup>1</sup>
3. Install fireplace inserts, which improve heating efficiency by blowing heat from the fire into the room and limiting the amount of heat lost up the chimney. Make sure the insert is compatible with the chimney and vent flue, and that it meets local fire safety rules.

### Furnace

1. Replace or clean filters once a month. Cover the filter slot with a piece of wide tape to keep air from getting around filter edges without passing through the filter.
2. Keep your furnace clean, lubricated, and properly adjusted. Vacuum dust and pet hair from warm air registers and cold air returns.
3. Have a professional tune-up annually. A properly running furnace can save up to 5% in heating costs.<sup>1</sup>

### Water Heater

1. Feel the surface of your water heater. If it's hot, or even warm, heat is being wasted. Wrap it in an insulating blanket.
2. Water heaters account for about 13% of home energy costs.<sup>2</sup> If yours is more than 12 years old, consider replacing it with a new, more energy efficient model.<sup>3</sup> Because older heaters keep water hot in a storage tank when not in use, newer models known as "demand" or "instantaneous" water heaters can save as much as 20 to 30% over older models by heating the water when needed.
3. Insulate water delivery pipes which otherwise can be responsible for major heat loss from tank to user.

### Insulation

1. Depending on the type of home, installing proper insulation can reduce heating and cooling costs by up to 20%.<sup>4</sup>
2. Upgrade in exterior walls, crawl spaces, basements, and attics.
3. Types of insulation include:
  - (a) Batts – fit between studs in walls or joists in ceilings and floors. Made of fiberglass or rock wool.
  - (b) Rolls (blankets) – can be laid over attic floors. Made of fiberglass.
  - (c) Loose-fill – can be blown into walls or attics. More easily fits around pipes and wires. Fiberglass, rock wool, or cellulose.
  - (d) Rigid Foam Boards – for confined spaces like foundations, basements, crawl space walls. Made of XPS (blueboard), EPS (beadboard), or other materials.
  - (e) Foam – like loose fill, can be blown into walls or attics. Usually more expensive than fiber-based products.

### Windows, Doors, and Electrical Outlets

1. Seal all potential leaks with weather-stripping around windows, doors, and electrical outlets to eliminate drafts and prevent heat from escaping.

### Windows

1. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, inefficient windows can account for up to 25% of a home's heating bill.<sup>5</sup>
2. Install high efficiency windows to save 40% over standard windows, or add storm windows, which can cut heat loss by up to 50%.<sup>5</sup> Look for double pane windows that have:

(a) argon or krypton gas-fill (which slows down the loss of heat between panes to the outside)

(b) warm-edge spacers between the panes (versus standard aluminum spacers that conduct heat and can form condensation)

(c) a high performance glass coating (low-emittance or "low-e") to suppress heat flow moving from pane to pane.

3. Keep shades and curtains open during the day on the south side of the home to take advantage of natural solar heating.
4. Close shades and curtains at night to retain the heat.
5. Remove window air conditioners or seal them with caulking or tape. Cover them with an airtight, insulated jacket to keep out moisture.

### Thermostats

1. Set your thermostat to 68°F when you are awake at home, and lower it when you are asleep or away. This will ensure optimal home heating and will save energy.
2. Install a programmable thermostat. Programmable thermostats can be pre-set to adjust temperatures several times per day.

### Ceiling Fans

1. Reverse your ceiling fan motor and set it to the slowest speed in the winter. By causing the blades to push hot air up where it normally rises, the air will then be driven back down to the edges of the room.

Have some "winter winners" of your own? Why not share them with us? We'd love to hear from you.

We hope these seasonal tips are helpful. And we thank you for your continuing participation in the ComEd Residential Real-Time Pricing Program.

Sincerely,  
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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.fypower.org/res/tools/energy\\_tips\\_results.html?tips=cooling](http://www.fypower.org/res/tools/energy_tips_results.html?tips=cooling)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.fypower.org/res/tools/energy\\_tips.html](http://www.fypower.org/res/tools/energy_tips.html)

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.fypower.org/res/tools/products\\_results.html?id=100215](http://www.fypower.org/res/tools/products_results.html?id=100215)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home\\_sealing\\_hm\\_improvement\\_methodology](http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=home_sealing_hm_improvement_methodology)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www1.eere.energy.gov/consumer/tips/windows.html>