

Winter Energy Tips For Your Home - Apartment

Attic Fans: If your house has an attic fan in the hallway, make sure you cover the opening grates. Most covers have a hard plastic outer shell with styrofoam that fits over the opening. If your house does not have a cover - check with your local Home Depot, Lowes, or Hardware Store to see about getting one. Leaving this uncovered is like having an open chimney into your attic.

Fireplaces: Most fireplaces are very poorly designed to prevent cold air from entering your home. On a windy day, go over by the fireplace - wet your finger and run it around the opening. If you can feel the cold air infiltrating, then it is time to take action.

- 1 Install quality air tight glass doors that will prevent air infiltration
- 2 Cover the opening with with a sheet of plywood cut to fit - install weather stripping around the perimeter to prevent air from entering. When using fireplace, do not place plywood back until fireplace surface has cooled
- 3 Cover the opening with decorative lap blanket or throw - use an extension rod that can be fit over fireplace and wrap blanket over rod - weight it down at bottom.

Bathrooms: If your bathroom has an exhaust fan in the ceiling, keep the entry door closed during the winter. These fans exhaust into the attic or outside and on windy days, cold air will enter through the fan opening. Do not cover these units - you need to exhaust the moisture from the room after showering or bathing.

Hot Water Heaters: Insulate the exterior of your hot water heater - insulating blankets are available from your local home improvements store. Make sure you do not cover the flue on a gas heater! Also, drain the tank until the water runs clear - sediment builds up at the bottom of tank and takes more energy to heat your water.

Window - Door Caulking: Make sure your windows and doors are thoroughly caulked around the frames. If the caulk is old or cracked, remove it and clean the surface using Rubbing Alcohol. Then apply a new bead to seal the cracks.

Window - Door Weather Stripping: Make sure the weather stripping around your doors and frames is in good shape. If not, replace it to prevent air infiltration.

If you have storm windows on your house and see condensation on them, moist inside air is escaping. Check your top & bottom stripping to see if it is cracked. Replace if possible. If not, pick up some crack filler foam from your local hardware store. Insert this round foam in the space at the top and bottom where the window frame and windows meet. Do not stretch the foam while inserting it - a putty knife aids the job. Generally this will block the air movement and storm windows should clear in a day or two.

Thermostat: Set your thermostat back. If you do not have a programmable unit, you might want to either install one yourself or have it installed. When away from home, set the unit to lower the heat - then kick the heat up when you are due back. Newer units are fairly inexpensive and easy to install.

Note: If you have a Heat Pump or two stage Air Conditioner you must install a thermostat designed for these type systems. They are available at Home Depot and Lowes, plus many larger hardware stores. Consult your Heat Pump manual for recommended set back degrees. Heat Pump units are not designed for major swings in temperature without having to kick in the auxiliary heat - this defeats the energy savings of these units. Newer models have small gas furnaces that are used for auxiliary heat.

Furnace Filters: Make sure you change your filter on a regular basis. The newer pleated filters should be changed monthly. These get dirty faster and restrict air flow - this causes your furnace motor to work harder and take longer to heat up your home. As a reminder, place a sticker next to the filter opening showing last change date.

We also recommend you install a carbon monoxide detector in the ceiling above your furnace / hot water heater area.

Ductwork: For winter, your main ductwork air flow should be out of the lower level vents. If your home is two story, then close down the upper level floor grates - open lower level grates fully. Some homes have main ductwork baffles that can direct airflow to certain parts of the house - these have a lever protruding from the main trunk lines. By opening / closing these, you should be able to determine the effects. Once you have them set, mark locations with a Sharpie™ pen: Winter and Summer.

Humidifier: In the winter, your house will be more comfortable and you can set the temperature lower by adding moisture into your home. Whole house units can be added to most furnaces and are activated by the blower motor + internal air sensors. If you are unable to add a furnace unit, look at picking up a room unit, making sure you keep it clean and full of water.

Cold Rooms: One of the easiest ways we have found to provide additional heat to a room is with one the small ceramic heaters. Units are now offered in different sizes and are relatively inexpensive. They are economical to operate and are safe around children and pets. We have used them for nearly 20 years.

Outside Hoses: It is imperative that you **disconnect** your hose from outside faucets in the winter. Newer homes have Frost Proof faucets - hoses attached prevent them from draining properly. This will cause the water in the interior pipe that protrudes within your home to freeze and split - when the water is turned on outside, the interior of your home will have water flowing from the split pipe, potentially causing major damage. On older homes, the pipes to the outside must be shut off and manually bled to prevent pipes from freezing - we have seen the results of not doing this and it was a disaster.