

Energy Saving Tips

Although there's not much that can be done to lower the price of natural gas this winter, there are some no- or low-cost things you can do to save on your gas bill. Having a professional energy audit of your home can also help identify additional ways to tighten up your home and save on heating bills.

1. Reduce thermostat setting to 68 degrees.

Reducing your thermostat setting can substantially lower your heating costs. Putting on those extra layers will help you stay comfortable while saving on your heating bill.

2. Set back thermostat at night and when you leave home.

Setting the thermostat back 10 degrees at night or when the house will be unoccupied can save up to 15% on heating costs. The furnace will have to run more to reheat the house, but the energy saved while the home is cooler more than offsets the extra run time to reheat the home.

3. Install a programmable thermostat.

Programmable thermostats allow you to reduce your home's temperature at night and during the day and still have the home warm when you wake up or come home from work. Some programmable thermostats cost less than \$50 and can be installed by homeowners.

4. Change furnace filter monthly.

Clogged furnace filters lower the heater's efficiency by preventing proper airflow through the furnace. Low-cost filters are available from your local hardware store. Check filters monthly to see if they need changing.

5. Have furnace "tuned up" annually.

Having your furnace cleaned and tuned annually helps the heating system operate safely and efficiently. Tuning may involve resetting the fuel-air mixture for proper combustion as well as cleaning of the blower and burners to assure maximum airflow and complete combustion. New furnaces don't need to be cleaned and tuned for the first few years.

6. Let sunshine in south windows.

Open drapes on the south side of your home during winter days and close them at night. Sun angles are low in winter, allowing substantial solar heating through all south windows. You may want to trim vegetation that shades south windows.

7. Check and replace weather stripping on doors and windows.

Air leaks around faulty weather stripping on doors and windows not only make your home drafty but they also increase heating costs. Check for drafts, and repair or replace worn stripping.

8. Close storm windows and doors.

Storm windows installed over primary windows are almost as good as double-pane windows for reducing heat loss, but they only work if they are kept closed. Be sure all your storm windows are properly closed when cold weather arrives.

9. Operate kitchen and bath vents minimally.

Bath and kitchen vents exhaust moisture, along with heated air, to the outside. If your home is dry during the winter, you may not need to operate these vents at all. However, if you have condensation on windows, operate the vents as needed to remove cooking and bathing moisture.

10. Lower the thermostat set point on your water heater.

Keep water temperatures at about 120 degrees. You can check your water temperature by carefully placing the back of your hand under a steady stream of hot water—if you can't keep your hand there, your water is too hot.

11. Install a water heater blanket.

Older water heaters may not have adequate insulation. Installing an insulating water heater jacket can save energy costs. Be careful to follow manufacturers' recommendations and don't cover the thermostat.

12. Reduce hot water use.

Reducing hot water use reduces the cost of heating water. Low-flow showerheads save water and energy. Showers generally use less water than baths. Using the cold water setting on your washing machine and repairing leaky faucets will save on water and water-heating costs.

Need help paying your heating bills?

Energy assistance programs are available to natural gas customers with limited means. To find out if you qualify for assistance, contact your local natural gas company or the Kansas Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIEAP) at 1-800-432-0043 or online at <http://www.srskansas.org/ISD/ees/lieap.htm>.