



Don't Let Your Winter Efficiency Fall Behind

SMALL CHANGES IN THE HOME CAN HELP REDUCE ENERGY COSTS FOR THE UPCOMING SEASONAL DROPS IN TEMPERATURE.

Take time this fall to make improvements around your home that will boost energy efficiency. Winter tends to bring increased expenses from hosting holiday celebrations, buying gifts, and warming the home through frigid temperatures.

While it can be the most wonderful time of the year, it can also be the most costly and least efficient. Fortunately, there are ways you can prepare your home now to help cut back on those winter energy costs.

Start the season off with a fresh filter and a thorough cleaning of your furnace. The filter should be checked every month. Dirty ones should be replaced. A dirty filter forces your heating system to work harder and waste energy. You may also want to have a technician verify that the furnace will heat the home at peak efficiency.

Once your heating system is working as efficiently as possible, take the time to ensure that you are not losing energy through air leaks around the home. Check for drafts around windows, doors, fireplaces, electrical boxes, outlets, and light switches. Use caulk and weather stripping to fill in gaps and leaks.

Also check your attic insulation level. According to EnergyStar.gov, if it is just level with or below the floor joists, more insulation should be added to help prevent you heat loss and save energy.

Before you crank up your heater, switch out window and door screens with storm windows and doors in order to form a stronger barrier from the elements.

When temperatures drop, it takes more energy to heat the water in the home. Prepare by insulating your hot water heater so that it can stay warm longer without wasting energy. If your water heater is warm to the touch, it should be covered by a blanket. Also, you can lower the temperature of the water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit and still enjoy comfortable hot water—with lowered heating costs.

Other small changes in the home can also help reduce energy costs for the upcoming seasonal drops in temperature. Before you begin to heat the home, check that vents are not blocked by furniture or curtains. Make sure that radiators or baseboards are also clean and unobstructed so that they can distribute heat more efficiently. If you have a fireplace, be sure to keep

the damper closed when it is not being used. If you do not foresee use of the fireplace, plug and seal the flue.

Do not heat rooms that are not being used. Let sun shine in throughout the day. Close drapes on north-facing windows, but keep them open on southern and eastern windows. Be sure to close your window coverings on cloudy days and at night to reduce heat loss. Adding area rugs into your décor can help insulate the floor of your room, using less heat when temperatures drop.

If you have a schedule where you are regularly away from home for part of the day, consider installing a programmable thermostat, which can help you save money. Also, if you are looking to replace an older appliance, consider Energy Star labeled products, which can save you money over the life of the appliance.

By preparing before cold weather hits, you'll be able to make improvements that will help you cut back on energy waste so that the first cold snap doesn't take you by surprise.

Find more tips at byelectric.coop/energy-tips-and-resources.