



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Lower Your Home Energy Bills without Sacrificing Comfort this Winter

ANDREW J LANZA November 23, 2011

Take the chill out of your bills with home heating tips from NYSERDA

Here in the Northeast, heating your home during the winter months can account for a big chunk of your home energy bill. Before the cold weather approaches, now is the time to take action to ensure that you and your family stay warm this winter without draining your wallet. Use these tips from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to reduce your home energy usage.

- **Keep out the drafts:** By reducing the drafts around windows and doors, you can save big on your heating bills this winter while increasing your comfort. Make sure windows and storms are tightly closed and secured to reduce drafts. Consider installing window film to the interior of the windows. Install or upgrade exterior door weather-stripping. Use sand-filled door draft stoppers or “snakes” at the bottom of exterior doors to keep out drafts.
- **Push down the warm air:** Ceiling fans are a great way to keep comfortable any time of year. In the winter, reverse the direction of the blades so they are running clockwise to push the warm air downward.
- **Keep your water heater cozy:** For optimal energy savings and comfort, set your water heater to 120 degrees, and if your water heater is electric and more than five years old, install a water heater blanket, which will reduce heat loss. A simple way to tell if your water heater needs additional insulation is to feel the sides of the tank. If they’re warm, you know you need more insulation. Additionally, insulate the hot water pipes around the water heater with pipe insulation, especially if your heater is located in an unheated area of your home.
- **Make energy saving automatic:** Install a programmable thermostat. It’s an inexpensive way to maintain comfort throughout the season and enjoy energy savings at the same time. Before you leave for work or for a holiday trip—or even before you go to sleep—set your programmable thermostat to reduce the temperature automatically for optimal energy savings. By turning your thermostat back 10° to 15° for eight hours, you can save about 5 percent to 15 percent a year on your heating bill—a savings of as much as 1 percent for each degree if the setback period is eight hours long.
- **Don’t overlook your furnace:** Be sure to have your furnace serviced on a regular basis, usually once a year. Replacing your furnace filters throughout the heating season, usually once a month, is a great do-it-yourself way of saving energy too. Also, if you are thinking about replacing your

home heating system, look for ENERGY STAR® qualified equipment, which is more energy-efficient than other models. A Home Performance with ENERGY STAR professional will make sure it is properly sized and installed correctly.

- **Prevent ice dams:** Remove leaves and other debris from gutters before the first snow. Make sure attic insulation is not blocking roof ventilation. Hire a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® contractor accredited through the Building Performance Institute (BPI) to inspect your attic and seal air leaks and add insulation, if needed. These measures should help you prevent roof ice build-up and those all too costly roof leaks.
- **Use your fireplace wisely:** Did you know that your fireplace flue can suck the heated air out of your home when not in use? This can cause your furnace to work harder to replace that warm air, costing you money. So, when your fireplace is not in use, make sure the damper is closed tightly to prevent air, and money, from escaping.
- **Don't forget the air conditioner:** During the winter months, remove air conditioning units from windows to prevent heat from escaping through and around them. If the units can't be removed, install a cover to prevent unwanted drafts. The drafts around an unsealed air conditioner unit are equivalent to having a basketball-sized hole in your wall!
- **Save even more energy and dollars with a comprehensive energy assessment:** The tips above provide ideas for simple steps you can take to reduce your energy costs this winter. For a worry-free winter and the greatest energy savings, have a comprehensive home energy assessment conducted by an accredited Home Performance contractor. These professionals will check out your whole house from basement to attic and recommend ways to save energy, cut energy bills and improve the health and safety of your home. The assessment is free for most New Yorkers, and NYSERDA makes improvements more affordable with 10 percent cash back on eligible improvements and low-interest loans. Homeowners can cut their energy costs by hundreds of dollars to more than a thousand dollars each year after participating in this program. To find out how you can qualify for a free or reduced-cost whole-house energy assessment in New York State, go to <http://nysesda.ny.gov/residential>.

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