

Conserve Energy

SIMPLE TIPS FOR REDUCING YOUR NATURAL GAS USAGE AND COSTS

Taking steps to make your home more energy efficient is an important way to reduce your natural gas costs and conserve energy.

There are several no-cost and low-cost actions you can take but, the two biggest factors are to improving energy efficiency are proper insulation and an efficient heating system. All materials needed to make the changes listed below can be purchased at your local hardware or home improvement store.

There are many energy-saving ways to help reduce costs.

Water Heater

Approximately 14% of your utility bill is from heating water. Here is how you can save:

Install aerating, low-flow faucets

Insulate hot water pipes, especially in unheated areas

Set water heater thermostat at medium or low, or at 120 degrees

Laundry/Dishes

Use cold water with a cold water detergent when possible, for laundry

Wash full loads of laundry and dishes

Use cool-down cycle for final phase of dishwasher drying

Don't leave hot water running when washing dishes by hand, brushing teeth or shaving

Scrape, don't rinse, dishes before loading the dishwasher

Dryer

Hang clothes outside to dry * Sunlight and breeze are free

Dry full loads of laundry

Dry towels and heavier cottons in separate loads from lighter weight clothes

Clean lint trap after every load

Check outside vent exhaust to ensure it closes tightly

Gas Range

Use a medium or low flame and match the pot or pan to the heating surface

Clean the range often

Cover pots and pans when cooking so heat does not escape

Buy products with an electric ignition instead of a "standing" pilot light

Match the size of the pot or pan to the heating surface

Don't pre-heat oven, it is usually not necessary

While baking, resist the urge to open the door for multiple checks on food – heat will escape

SIMPLE TIPS FOR REDUCING YOUR NATURAL GAS USAGE AND COSTS continued..

Windows

Use heavy-duty clear plastic sheeting on the inside of windows in colder months. Make sure it is sealed tightly against the window frame.

In cold weather, open drapes or blinds on sunny days and close them at night

You can still do more

Simple lifestyle changes can also make a big difference in the amount of natural gas you use on a daily basis:

Install low-flow showerheads

Repair leaking faucets. A dripping faucet can amount to a three gallon water loss per day and approximately 1,100 gallons per year.

Take more showers than baths and reduce your time in the shower

Dress in layers for warmth which will allow for lowering your thermostat by a few degrees

You can do even more

Here are a few simple tips on how to properly insulate your home:

Make sure your attic insulation has an R-49 value

Sidewall insulation should have an R-18 to R-22 value

Insulate all exposed ductwork, including joints and leaks

Seal all cracks around windows and doors with silicon-acrylic caulking

Install door sweeps and weather stripping on outside doors

Make sure no warm air is escaping into your attic – insulate access to attic

Use insulated gaskets behind electric outlets and switch plate covers

Heating Systems

As much as half of an average homeowner's utility bill is heating and cooling costs. To reduce these costs, keep your home heating system operating efficiently with these simple tips:

If purchasing appliances or windows, look for ENERGY STAR products

In cooler months, turn your thermostat down as low as comfortable. A one degree (permanent set-back) can result in a two to three percent savings. A ten degree (temporary set-back) for a minimum of eight hours, can result in a 15 percent annual savings

Note: Consider setting back the thermostat while you are at work, school, sleeping or away from home for extended periods of time

Install a programmable thermostat so the furnace's output is reduced when you are not at home.

Release trapped air from radiators

Schedule a heating system safety check-up annually and a cleaning every two years with a reputable contractor

Check water levels on water or steam heat systems

Keep area around the furnace and registers clean and clear

If possible, don't heat rooms you don't use

Using these energy saving tips and your common sense can help you to stay warm while reducing your energy consumption this heating season.

