



NEWS & INFORMATION

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Start now to save energy and increase comfort this winter

With colder weather arriving, now is a good time to make changes that will save energy, reduce utility bills, and safely improve home comfort this winter. The Iowa Utilities Board urges Iowans to do whatever they can to make their homes, or the homes of others needing assistance, more energy efficient.

One of the easiest and least expensive things to do is seal air leaks on exterior walls using caulk and weatherstripping materials, which are relatively inexpensive and available at hardware and department stores. Doing this will save energy for many years. Common spots to seal are around windows, doors, foundations, and the edges of exterior siding. Weatherstripping can be applied to movable surfaces like doors and windows while more permanent seals like caulk or flashing can fill gaps in other areas. Do-it-yourselfers should remove dirt and grit or any loose paint from areas to be caulked. Also, remember to caulk around new holes or disturbances to outside walls when additional pipes or cables are installed.

In colder weather, turn down your thermostat to conserve more energy, especially when sleeping or whenever your home will be unoccupied. Add layers of clothing or bedding for comfort. Set a goal of lowering your thermostat enough to effectively manage the internal temperature without reducing your comfort level to a point where it might adversely impact anyone's health. Most people can safely lower the temperature a few degrees, but anyone with health concerns should consult their physician first. If constantly changing your thermostat is difficult, consider a programmable thermostat. This will help you maximize your comfort while better managing your home's temperature and energy use.

To compensate for a cooler inside temperature, some people use small electric space heaters, which can be efficient when used on a limited basis to heat small, localized areas. However, health and safety should be primary considerations when doing this. Always place an electric space heater away from any combustible objects or materials and shut it off if you leave the room or are at risk of falling asleep. Try to avoid using extension cords for portable heaters. If you do use them, properly grounded and insulated heavy-duty electrical cords are safest.

Other things that can save energy and money are:

- Changing furnace filters often
- Having heating systems serviced annually by a qualified professional
- Having a professional energy assessment (see if your utility offers this service)
- Upgrading insulation in the attic, walls and floors, basement, or crawl spaces
- Replacing inefficient windows
- Replacing old or inefficient furnaces

Replacement windows and furnaces should be Energy Star certified. Many utilities offer free energy assessments of homes and businesses and/or cash rebates to customers for various energy efficiency investments. For more information, contact your local gas or electric utility.

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