



# NEWS & INFORMATION

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September 3, 2010

**For Immediate Release**

20-10

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## **IUB says now is an ideal time for home weatherization**

Though temperatures are still warm and most people don't like to think about winter's arrival just yet, now is an ideal time to weatherize your own home and to help weatherize the homes of friends, relatives, or neighbors who would benefit from it, according to the Iowa Utilities Board.

In addition to saving money on utility bills over time, home weatherization can make people much more comfortable in their homes, especially during temperature extremes. One of the simplest and cheapest means to reduce energy use this winter, and throughout the year, is to seal air leaks on a home's exterior walls. Caulk and weather-stripping materials are relatively inexpensive and available at hardware and department stores.

It is usually relatively simple and inexpensive to complete some basic weatherization on a home's exterior. Doing so will save energy for many years. Most homes can be weatherized around windows, doors, and at the base of exterior siding using primarily caulk, weather-stripping, and flashing. Do-it-yourselfers should remove dirt and grit or any loose paint from areas to be caulked (small cracks, gaps). Try not to caulk in rainy weather or when the temperature is below 40 degrees. Consider also that caulk sets faster on hot days, leaving less time to trim or clean up messy spots. Remember to caulk around new holes or disturbances to outside walls whenever additional pipes or cables are installed. You can also use caulk to seal any gaps between the wall and the trim on your windows. Apply caulk in a continuous motion, forcing it into cracks around windows, by holding the caulk gun at a 45-degree angle to the work surface. Release the handle just before reaching the end of the crack to prevent "run-on" and reduce waste.

A can of expanding foam sealant can be used to fit larger, irregularly-shaped gaps. You may need to use fillers to plug extra-wide gaps. Fillers come in a wide variety of materials—cotton, fiberglass, foam, and sponge rubber. However, these fillers are not designed for exposure to the elements, so you will need to caulk or seal over them. To close gaps too wide for foam, use foil-faced bubble wrap. For really large holes, cut sections of rigid foam insulation to fit and glue into place with expanding foam before covering the area with wood or another appropriate building material.

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Also seal the inside of the home. Put plastic on windows if needed, caulk and seal air leaks around attic doors, and install foam gaskets behind outlet covers and switchplates. Foam gaskets are used to seal switches and outlets that do not already have a tight seal against the wall. Air can leak through interior walls, flowing up into the attic, as well as through exterior walls. So install the gaskets on all your walls. Plastic safety plugs can be used to stop air leaks through unused electrical outlets.

Many customers can take some other simple steps to use energy more wisely and utilities can often advise them of means for doing this, which may help them get through high-cost months. In cold weather, turn the thermostat down as much as safely possible, especially when sleeping or whenever the home is unoccupied. For winter comfort and safety, add layers of clothing and bedding. Have a home energy audit (many utilities offer this as a free service to customers) and use a programmable thermostat. A programmable thermostat will help you do so with peak efficiency and comfort. Also, turn off extra lights, electronic devices, or appliances that are not needed at any given time.

### **Sources and Other Resources**

- “A Do-It-Yourself Guide to ENERGY STAR Home Sealing” [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)
- “AIR SEALING seal air leaks and save energy!” Technology Fact Sheet from the US Department of Energy
- Home Depot, [www.homedepot.com](http://www.homedepot.com)
- “Home Tightening, Insulation and Ventilation,” Volume 1 of the Home Series from the Iowa Energy Center
- Iowa Energy Center, [www.energy.iastate.edu](http://www.energy.iastate.edu)
- Iowa Utilities Board, [www.state.ia.us/iub](http://www.state.ia.us/iub)
- Lowes, [www.lowes.com](http://www.lowes.com)

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