

KEEPING THE WARMTH IN




AND THE COLD OUT

Your Guide to Energy Conservation


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Top to Bottom, Inside and Out:



A WHOLE-HOUSE APPROACH TO ENERGY CONSERVATION MAKES CENTS!




One way to keep your family and your wallet comfortable this winter is to make **ENERGY-
SAVING** improvements around your house.



Not only does a whole-house approach to energy conservation take your energy dollars further, it can help reduce the impact of higher gas prices on your **HOUSEHOLD BUDGET**.



In this booklet, you'll find easy, practical **SOLUTIONS** for conserving energy in every room of your home. Most of the tips you'll see are **INEXPENSIVE** steps you can take now to reduce your household energy consumption and **MINIMIZE ENERGY LOSS**.



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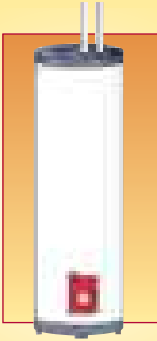
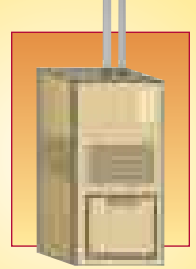
BASEMENT



The Foundation of Energy Savings

FURNACE

- Schedule an annual inspection of your heating system. A qualified contractor can inspect your furnace to ensure it is working properly. If repairs are needed, have a qualified contractor perform the work.
- If your furnace is old, replacing it with a new, high efficiency furnace can save valuable energy dollars.
- Replace air filters in your furnace every three to six months. Clogged filters make the furnace work harder, wearing it down.



WATER HEATER

- Wrap the water heater tank with an insulation blanket (in accordance with the manufacturer's guidelines) to keep water in the tank warm – reducing the amount of energy needed to heat up the water. Also, insulate the water pipes leading out from your water heater with inexpensive foam sleeves.
- Periodically drain the water heater until water runs clear. This allows sediment and mineral deposits to escape and increases efficiency.



DOORS

Shut Out Wasted Energy

- Install a storm door with weather-stripping and bottom sweep to seal the elements outside. Replace thresholds so the cold doesn't sneak under the door.
- Cover areas around letterboxes and keyholes with flaps or brush seals to prevent heat from escaping.



HOT TIP!

Lower your water heater thermostat setting to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. For a family of four, this could reduce energy use by 15 percent, saving approximately \$37 per year.¹



HOT TIP!

Replace weather stripping and seals on windows and doors. You will save between five and 10 percent on your annual heating and cooling costs.

WINDOWS

Look Out for Hidden Savings

- Make sure all storm windows are closed. It only takes one or two unprotected windows to chill a room and lose heating dollars.
- On windows that face the sun, leave draperies open during the day. At night, close drapes to help keep heat inside. Consider installing heavy draperies on large windows.
- Double-glazing windows can cut heat losses in half.
- Remove window air conditioners in the winter, then seal the space where it was installed.





STOVETOP

- Turn off the range hood fan as soon as you are done using it. It can drain the house of heated or cooled air in just one hour.
- When cooking, make sure the size of your pan matches the size of the burner. If the flames are bigger than the pan base, you're wasting heat.
- Keep range-top burners clean so heat reflects properly.



BRIGHT IDEA!

Restrict or limit the use of portable electric space heaters. A 1,200 watt space heater left operating 12 hours per day for one month will result in 432 kWh of electric usage. Over the course of the heating season, this translates to more than \$95.²

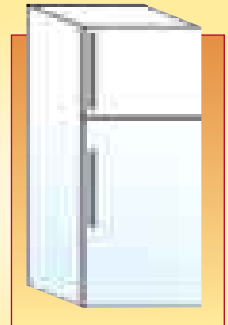
OVEN

- Cook foods in glass or ceramic pans. You can set your oven 25 degrees cooler and your food will cook at the same rate.
- Don't open your oven door to check your food. The oven can lose 25 percent of its heat when you open the door.
- When baking, cook several things together to shorten the time the oven is on. Or, make double batches and freeze them for later use.
- When re-heating or cooking small foods, use the microwave or toaster oven instead of your oven.
- If you plan to use the self-cleaning oven feature, do it right after you've baked so the oven doesn't need to re-heat.



REFRIGERATOR/FREEZER

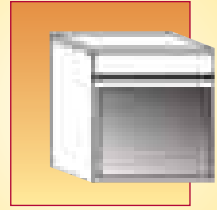
- Consider replacing your old refrigerator. New units use half as much energy as those made 20 years ago, even if they are the same size.
- Clean refrigerator coils every six months to keep the appliance running efficiently.
- Defrost your freezer. Frost build-up makes the freezer work harder to keep your food frozen.
- Keep your refrigerator full enough to maximize cooling power, but don't stock it so full that the air can't circulate.
- Make sure the seal on your refrigerator door is tight. If you can easily slide a dollar bill through it when it is closed, the gaskets should be replaced.





DISHWASHER

- Run only full loads in the dishwasher. To save energy on the dry cycle, use the air dry cycle or open the door to let air circulate.



BRIGHT IDEA!

Shut off lights, televisions, stereos and electric appliances when not in use. A single 60 watt light bulb left on 12 hours per day for one year uses 263kWh of energy, totaling \$23 per year. Multiply this by the number of lights and appliances in your home and the potential for savings is significant.³

REDECORATING?

Shop Smart and Save Energy


- When shopping for new appliances, look for those with the Energy Star logo. An Energy Star-qualified clothes washer uses 8,000 fewer gallons of water each year.
- Replace your top-loading washing machine with a front-loading horizontal axis model. They use less energy and water.
- When shopping for a new clothes dryer, purchase one that senses when clothes are dry and automatically shuts off.
- When purchasing a new refrigerator, consider one with a small trap door on the front that allows you to access items without opening the door, causing cool air to escape. Some newer models will even alert you when you leave the door open.
- When planning a new kitchen, don't put the refrigerator next to any other appliances. Appliances need buffers around them so they operate correctly and efficiently.
- When replacing windows, be sure to research those that will save the most energy. Choose windows with a low U-value (lower than .35) to maximize insulating qualities.
- Replace your wood front door with one made from fiberglass. Fiberglass offers up to five times more protection from cold than traditional wood doors.



BATHROOM

Don't Let Energy Go Down the Drain



- Place faucet levers in the “cold” position when using small amounts of water as the “hot” position uses energy to heat the water even though it may never reach the faucet.
- Replace your showerhead with one that saves water to reduce the costs of heating water. 
- Turn off the bathroom vent fan as soon as you are done using it. It can drain the house of heated or cooled air in just one hour.



LAUNDRY ROOM

Wash Out Wasted Energy

- Dry loads one after another to keep the dryer from having to heat up more than necessary.
- Regularly clean the air vent leading from your dryer to outside as well as the lint screen to maintain efficiency.



HOT TIP!

Wash clothes in cold water and avoid using the longest setting unless completely necessary. Washing in cold water can save up to 12 gallons of hot water per load. Based on an average of eight loads per week, you could save approximately \$46 per year.⁵



HOT TIP!

An average bath uses 15 to 25 gallons of hot water while a five minute shower uses less than 10 gallons. To save energy, take showers instead of baths. And, when you shower, keep it as short and cool as tolerable.⁴





HOT TIP!

Fix leaky faucets. One drip can waste up to 250 gallons of water per month, which translates to 3,000 gallons of wasted water annually.⁶



BRIGHT IDEA!

Replace incandescent bulbs with energy efficient fluorescent lamps, which use three-fourths less energy and last up to five times longer. For each 60 watt lamp replaced, you could save approximately 100kWh or \$7.23 per year based on 2,200 hours of use. A typical 2,400 square foot home could save up to \$325 annually.⁷



FIREPLACE

Are You Sending Energy Dollars Up In Smoke?



- Remember to close the chimney flue when the fireplace is not in use. An open flue is like an open window, allowing warm air to escape – 24 hours a day!
- When using the fireplace, turn your thermostat down to keep warm air from the fireplace in the house.



BRIGHT IDEA!

Install ceiling fans. During summer months, set them to go counterclockwise, creating a downdraft and making the room feel 8 degrees cooler. During winter months, set them to go clockwise, recirculating hot air at the ceiling.⁸

SET YOUR THERMOSTAT FOR SAVINGS

- Lower your thermostat temperature. Every one degree results in savings of between four and five percent on your energy bill. For example, lowering from 72 degrees Fahrenheit to 68 degrees Fahrenheit could save you 18 percent. For an average size home, the annual savings would be approximately \$150.⁹
- Install a setback thermostat to automatically lower the temperature setting at night or during unoccupied periods. A ten degree set back at night will save approximately five to 15 percent on annual heating costs. For an average size home, the annual savings would be approximately \$83.¹⁰

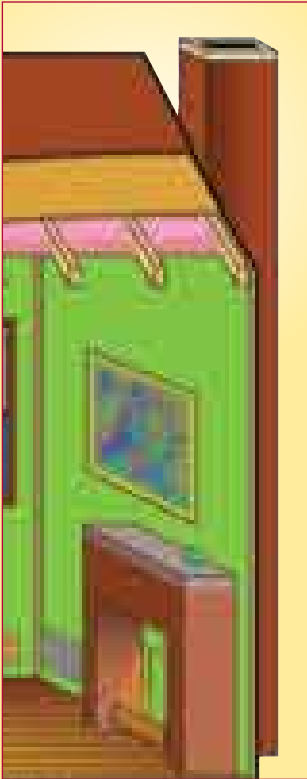


- Don't put lights by your thermostat. They can cause the thermostat to have an inaccurate reading.
- Consider a humidifier. Properly humidified air makes your home feel warmer and more comfortable, so you can keep your thermostat setting lower.



ENERGY EFFICIENCY OUTDOORS

- Keep your garage door closed during the winter so cold air doesn't penetrate the outer walls of your home.
- Use low-wattage lights outside. Several low-wattage fixtures use fewer watts than one floodlight. Or, consider solar-powered lights.
- Plant trees that shade your home to keep cooling costs down. Leafy trees shade best on the south and west sides. Deciduous trees that lose their leaves in the winter keep you cool in the summer from shade and warm the house in the winter by letting in sun. Plant evergreen trees to serve as wind breakers.



DUCTS

- Get your air ducts sealed by a professional HVAC contractor. According to the Department of Energy, you can lose up to 40 percent of your heated or cooled air through leaks in your ductwork.

ATTIC

- Add insulation to your attic. Purchase insulation with a high R-value (the higher the R-value, the better it will work).
- Install an attic fan to make sure your attic is properly ventilated. (An attic fan eliminates warm air in the summer, which can help regulate the temperature in your home.)

WALLS

- Use caulking, sealant or weather-stripping to weatherize all seams, cracks and openings around windows, doors and baseboards, as well as the small openings around television cables, dryer vents and plumbing pipes.

ROOF

- Keep the insulation in your attic dry and effective by repairing leaks in your roof.



WHILE YOU'RE AWAY

Pack Up Energy Savings



- If you're going on vacation, set your thermostat at 55 degrees. This will lower your heating expense while keeping your pipes from freezing.
- Turn the water heater down before you leave for vacation. Don't heat water you won't be around to use.



more THREE WAYS TO MANAGE HIGHER PRICES

1

ENROLL IN THE BUDGET PLAN

The **Budget Plan** spreads your gas bill payments over 12 months, providing some assurance of knowing how much your gas bill will be each month. Every four months, your Budget Plan payment may increase or decrease based on your current account balance and our estimates of future natural gas prices. To enroll, see your bill stub or call 1 877 Nicor4u.

Reminder: Nicor Gas can help you establish a good credit rating if you stay current on your natural gas bills (it is the company's policy to report payment history to a credit bureau). Keep current by enrolling in the Budget Plan and paying each monthly payment on time.



2

PARTICIPATE IN CUSTOMER SELECT®

Customer Select allows you to choose your natural gas supplier. You decide who your natural gas provider is and what services you'll get, and you may even be able to save money. To learn more, visit the Customer Select section of nicorgas.com.

3

SEE IF YOU QUALIFY FOR:

- **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** helps eligible low-income households pay for energy services. To find out if you qualify, contact your local LIHEAP intake office or call the Energy Information Line at 1 877-411-9276.
- **Nicor Gas Sharing Program** provides one-time annual grants of \$150 to residential customers who are having difficulty paying their gas bill and do not qualify for government assistance. To see if you qualify, contact your local Salvation Army office.
- **Illinois Home Weatherization Assistance Program (IHWAP)** provides weatherization services to low income homes. To find out if you qualify for weatherization assistance, contact your local LIHEAP office or call 1 877-411-9276.



Actual savings identified throughout this brochure will vary widely due to weather, size of home, type of construction, doors and windows, occupancy, internal loads, setback conditions, and thermostat set points.

1. Savings assume lowering water heater thermostat from 140 degrees Fahrenheit to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Savings based on a typical water heater using 300 therms of natural gas per year.
2. Savings assume use of 1200W space heater, 12 hours/day for four months. Savings calculated based on electric cost of \$.09/kWh. Savings include impact of increased heating in the winter.
3. Savings calculated based on electric cost of \$.09/kWh. Savings include impact of increased heating in the winter and reduced cooling in the summer.
4. Source: Department of Energy.
5. Savings assume eight loads of laundry, with 12 gallons of water used for each load. Savings calculated on 57 therms of natural gas saved at a cost of \$.80/therm.
6. 250 gallons/month assumes 90 degree Fahrenheit rise and 65 percent efficiency.
7. Savings based on replacing 40 60-watt incandescent bulbs with 15-watt fluorescent bulbs operating 2,200 hours per year. Savings include impact of increased heating in the winter and reduced cooling in the summer.
8. Source: Department of Energy.
9. Savings assume lowering thermostat from 72 degrees Fahrenheit to 68 degrees Fahrenheit. Savings calculated based on a home using 1,040 therms of natural gas per year at a cost of \$.80/therm.
10. Savings calculated based on a home using 1,040 therms of natural gas per year at a cost of \$.80/therm.



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