

HOMEOWNER TIP

Have you ever wondered about safety recalls on various consumer products? The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) conducts tests and issues safety recalls on many products. You can find out more at <http://www.cpsc.gov>.

IN THIS ISSUE

- ✓ EIGHT WAYS YOU CAN SAVE ENERGY!
- ✓ YOUR ROOF: EIGHT THINGS TO CONSIDER
- ✓ UP AND DOWN

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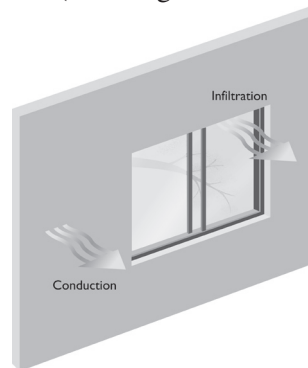
EIGHT WAYS YOU CAN SAVE ENERGY!

It's not that hard, really!!

If you have an existing home and want to reduce your energy bills, here are eight ways to do that. They are simple and basic because that's what energy saving is – simple and basic. If you read the latest Green Building guidelines published by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), you will find that building an energy-efficient home is a very big part of getting a Green Building rating. However, if you look closely at what is required for an energy-efficient home, with the exception of just a few new ideas, it is the same attention to detail that has always been at the heart of optimum energy efficiency: minimize infiltration and conduction losses.

Infiltration losses are air leaks, the direct loss of heat (or air conditioning) due to a “loose,” or drafty, house.

Conduction losses are direct energy losses through the walls, floors and ceiling/roof. Here, insulation makes a difference. Just as you are warmer with your winter coat on, your house will need less energy to heat or cool it if there is more insulation in the envelope (i.e., walls, floor, ceiling) and the windows are energy-efficient (double-glazed or better).



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In new construction, there are some new materials being used to decrease energy use even further. Structural insulated panel systems (SIPS) and insulated concrete foundation systems (ICFS) are becoming more popular among green-oriented and energy-conscious builders. Even though these are somewhat “high tech” and “leading edge” products, what they accomplish remains the same: they reduce infiltration and conduction losses.

Another point made by the NAHB Green Building guidelines is that your new home should be smaller! The average size single-family home in the United States has grown by more than 50 percent in the last 20 years. Energy consumption is directly proportional to the size of the home.

The one other area that deserves attention is the efficiency of the heating and/or cooling unit you are using. Again, the goal is simple: use the least amount of energy to produce the desired heating or cooling.

As they say, it’s not rocket science!

So, here are eight things you can do, right now, in your existing home. For reference, we are assuming your home is less than 50 years old. If it’s older than that, optimum energy efficiency may not be practical or in the best interest of your home.

1. Check your attic. If you don’t have the equivalent of at least 8-10 inches of fiberglass insulation, add more until you do.
2. Check your cooling equipment. If it’s more than 10 years old, replacing it will, most likely, be cost-effective with a relatively quick payback. And be sure to get the maximum energy rating. This is one area when waiting for the old equipment to die does not make economic sense.
3. Install foam “draft enders” on all outlets and switches in exterior walls.
4. Keep all of your windows tightly closed when using air conditioning (A/C) or heat.
5. If you don’t have good-quality double-glazed windows, consider upgrading. If you do upgrade your windows, we recommend replacement of the entire unit by a qualified window specialist. This will be more expensive and disruptive but will produce much more satisfactory results.
6. Check the weather-stripping on all doors. If it’s marginal, replace it.
7. Check your heating equipment. If the combustion efficiency isn’t at least 85% for oil and 90% for natural gas, replace or repair the equipment. This is one place where a 5% increase in efficiency will result in an almost direct 5% savings in energy.
8. Turn your thermostat down (or up, if A/C). If your house is unoccupied a lot, consider a programmable thermostat. Only heat how much and when you need it.

If you suspect a serious energy leak...

A specialist can evaluate your home from top to bottom, including the exterior, ductwork, heating and cooling systems, appliances and lighting. They provide a summary of recommendations with estimated costs, savings and the time it will take to reap a payback. You can get a referral from your state or local energy office.

Visit www.naseo.org/members/states.htm

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YOUR ROOF: EIGHT THINGS TO CONSIDER

An energy-efficient home is a well managed home. Be conscious about how you use (or lose) energy. Think simple: infiltration (air leaks), conduction (through the walls, windows, floor, and ceiling) and equipment efficiency. Good maintenance and attention to detail make all the difference.

Finally, think balance. A tight home may encourage indoor air quality (IAQ) problems. Good ventilation (outside the insulation line) is important to a healthy home. Also, mechanical ventilation to bring some fresh air into the living area is vital. Remember, the **most** efficient home has the following qualities:

- A cube shape (to minimize wall and roof surface for a given floor area),
- No windows,
- Only one door, and
- No interior ventilation.

Such a home would use less than half the energy of a typical home built in the 20th century. However, you would not (or could not) live in it. Optimum energy efficiency is about BALANCE between heat loss (or gain) and livability.

For 90 percent of the homes in the United States, attention to this list will result in a 10 percent or better improvement in energy consumption. Considering that there are more than 100 million homes in this country, a 10 percent energy savings is HUGE! And it's not hard.

If your house is like most in this country built in the last 50 years, it probably has a sloped roof with one of the following roofing materials:

- composition shingles
- composite tile
- cementateous or clay tile
- wood shingles
- metal roofing

Each type of roofing has its unique characteristics. However, there are also some common considerations to keep in mind.

1. The actual service life of a roof varies according to the location and exposure to sun and weather. You should not assume that the age of a roof determines its condition.
2. Roof leaks are not usually the result of the roofing itself failing. Leaks usually occur due to the failure or improper installation of some related component such as flashing or underlayment.

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3. When resurfacing a roof, you should strip the existing roofing material to the roof sheathing to allow for a visual inspection of the sheathing, and replacement of all of the related roof components.
 4. If you have dark stains on a composition roof, it is probably mold. Diluted chlorine cleaners and products such as Shingle Shield are effective at removing the growth. New shingles are more fungus-resistant than some of those manufactured in the 1980s and '90s.
 5. Cut back overhanging tree limbs. They can wear a hole in your roof from the wind blowing through the trees.
 6. If you have gutters, keep them clean. Gutters full of debris are far worse than no gutters. Debris encourages fungus, which can infect the roof sheathing. Rot and mold are the result.
 7. If you have wood shingles, make sure that they are treated for fire resistance and that the treatment is kept current.
 8. Keep your roof clean, especially the details around skylights, dormers and valleys, and take note of any change in shape – this is where leaks start.

Your roof has an important job to do - to keep you dry in all kinds of weather. If you take care of it, you will get the most reliable protection and longest life.

UP AND DOWN

When did you last test your garage door opener? You should do so at least once a year. There are a few ways to test it:

- While the door is closing, grab the handle and try to keep it open. With a modest tug, the door should reverse itself.
- Interrupt the infrared beam with your foot while the door is closing. The door should reverse.
- Put a 2 x 4 under the door. When it closes on it, the door should reverse.

If any of these tests fail, have the door adjusted ASAP. Remote garage door openers are a great convenience. However, they can be dangerous if not properly adjusted.

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nearest you, call
1-800-242-1969

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