

# ENERGY AND FIRE SAFETY TIPS FOR THE HEATING SEASON



With colder weather approaching and heating costs continuing to skyrocket, the **American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE)** and the **National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)** have joined together to offer some simple ways to save energy and keep you and your family safe and warm.

## ENERGY-SAVING TIPS

Saving energy isn't just about saving money for homeowners. Saving energy is beneficial on a global scale. The world is facing dwindling energy reserves, and the more we save, the better our future will be. Here are some things you can do:

### HEATING SYSTEMS:

- ◆ Set thermostats at 68°F (20°C) when the house is occupied during the day and then turn it down at night or when you're not home (60°F (15°C) is recommended). There are programmable thermostats that you can buy from local hardware and lumber stores that can do this automatically and easily. They are inexpensive, reliable and easy to install. This would not be recommended for "heat pump" systems if it would cause auxiliary heating to come on.
- ◆ Make sure supply and return vents, radiators and baseboard heating units are not obstructed by furniture, appliances or other objects and that air can flow freely to and from them. This will maximize the efficiency of your system and help distribute warm air throughout the room.
- ◆ Clean or change furnace filters in forced hot air systems once a month or more often as needed.
- ◆ Have your heating system maintained and serviced according to manufacturer's instructions (usually once a year). Dirty filters, coils and fans reduce airflow throughout the system, which decreases performance and can damage your system. Scheduling your service in the early fall when technicians are not as busy will probably save you money as well.
- ◆ Check heating ducts for air leaks from joints and holes. Check with your local hardware store for the proper listed mastic or tape to use for the particular job.
- ◆ Insulate your hot water tank with an insulating jacket according to manufacturer recommendations. Some newer tanks already are insulated, so



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check product literature to determine if insulation is needed. Insulate the first six feet of the hot water pipes connected to the water heater.

- ◆ You can turn down the thermostat in rooms that have all of the following:
  - are unoccupied and
  - can be closed off (closed doors) from the rest of the house and
  - have their own heating zone.However, do not do this if it adversely affects the rest of your system or could lead to freezing water pipes.

## WINDOWS & DOORS:

- ◆ Install caulking, weather stripping or use spray-in foams around exterior windows and doors or those between heated and unheated spaces (garages, basements, crawl spaces, attics). Read instructions for spray foams carefully. Expanding foams can exert enough pressure to cause doors and windows to jam or stick.
- ◆ During the heating season, keep draperies and shades open during the day on your southern facing walls to allow sunlight to enter. Keep them closed at night to reduce heat loss and the chill or “draft” you may feel from cold windows.

## EXHAUST FANS:

- ◆ Did you know that your kitchen or bath fan can pull out a houseful of heated air in just one hour?
- ◆ Turn off all fans as soon as they have done the job. Consider installing a timer switch instead of a manual switch to limit the unnecessary operation of an exhaust fan.

## FIRE SAFETY TIPS:

Heating equipment is a leading cause of home fires each year. Many of these fires can be prevented. Here are some things you can do:

- ◆ When buying a new space heater, make sure it carries the mark of an independent testing laboratory, and be sure to have fixed space heaters installed by a qualified technician, according to manufacturer’s instructions or applicable codes. Or make sure a qualified technician checks to see that the unit has been properly installed.
- ◆ Keep or maintain a 36-inch (1-meter) clearance between all heating equipment and anything that can burn.



- ◆ Portable space heaters should be turned off every time you leave the room or go to bed.
- ◆ Have any gas-fueled heating device installed with proper attention to ventilation. If unvented gas space heaters are used in bedrooms or bathrooms, make sure they are small and well-mounted. NFPA codes prohibit use of liquefied petroleum gas heaters with self-contained fuel supplies.
- ◆ Do not use your oven to heat your home.
- ◆ Have wood and coal stoves, fireplaces, chimneys, chimney connectors and all other solid-fueled heating equipment inspected annually by a professional, and cleaned as often as inspections suggest. Use only wood that is properly seasoned to reduce creosote build-up.
- ◆ If your power is out, avoid using candles. Use flashlights.
- ◆ Make sure your fireplace has a sturdy screen to prevent sparks from flying into the room. Allow fireplace and woodstove ashes to cool before disposing in a metal container.
- ◆ Test smoke alarms monthly and install and maintain a carbon monoxide alarm in a central location outside each sleeping area.

*There is help available if you need fuel assistance. Contact the National Energy Assistance Referral project toll-free at - 866 674-6327 from 8:00 am - 6:00 pm (EST).*

ASHRAE is the world’s foremost technical society in the fields of heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration. The Society helps keep indoor environments comfortable and productive, deliver healthy food to consumers and preserve the outdoor environment. Visit ASHRAE at [www.ashrae.org/consumer](http://www.ashrae.org/consumer).

NFPA has been a worldwide leader in providing fire, electrical, building, and life safety to the public since 1896. The mission of the international nonprofit organization is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by providing and advocating consensus codes and standards, research, training and education. Visit NFPA’s Web site at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org).



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