

HOME ENERGY QUIZ

Take this quiz and find out if you are ready for winter!

1. Choose the one group of products that cost the most on your monthly energy bills.

- Heating and cooling equipment, appliances and water heater
- Heating and cooling equipment, water heater and lighting
- Water heater, appliances and lighting

2. Does your home suffer from any of the following?

- Comfortable – no drafts
- Minor drafts – mostly around doors
- Major drafts around windows, drafty rooms and/or cold floors

3. What first step should you take to help reduce energy costs around the house?

- Locate and seal up drafts around doors, windows and baseboards with caulk or weather stripping
- Add insulation to the attic and basement, such as open wall tops and ducts
- Turn off heating and air conditioning system when you're away

4. Heating and cooling systems should be checked by a licensed contractor...

- Seasonally
- Annually
- When equipment no longer works properly

5. What is the most important thing you can do yourself to maintain your home heating and cooling systems?

- Replace or clean air filters and vents in the heating and cooling equipment
- Make sure heating vents and radiators are not blocked by furniture
- Turn the thermostat way up to heat my home quickly in the winter; lower the thermostat drastically to cool off quickly in the summer

6. Are you planning any home improvement projects this winter or spring?

- Yes, I'm planning steps to save energy this winter, and other projects for spring
- I've thought about projects, but may not have time or money to follow through
- No, my home is already perfect

SOURCE: EPA ENERGY STAR® Program



The Eldercare Locator is the first step to finding resources for older adults in any U.S. community. This is a free, national service of the Administration on Aging (AoA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), with resources for every community. This service is administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a).



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) leads the nation's environmental science, research, education and assessment efforts to protect human health and the environment.

HOW DID YOU DO?

If you scored mostly "a"s you are ENERGY SAVVY:

Great job! You are taking steps to save energy, protect the environment and natural resources, and maintain lower utility bills.

If you scored mostly "a"s and "b"s, you are ON THE RIGHT TRACK:

You know some ways to help your home be more energy efficient but may be unsure of other steps to take. You just need a little help to look for other simple ways to maximize your home's energy performance.

If you scored mostly "c"s, HELP IS ON THE WAY:

You have probably noticed some real "energy drains" in your home, but don't know how easy it can be to improve your home's overall energy performance and save on utility bills. Use the recommendations in this publication to help you get started.



Connecting You to Community Services

RESOURCES LISTED IN THIS PUBLICATION

- Eldercare Locator, 800.677.1116, www.eldercare.gov
- ENERGY STAR Program, 888.782.7937, www.energystar.gov
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), 866.674.6327 www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap
- U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Aging Initiatives, 202.564.2188, www.epa.gov/aging
- Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), 877.337.3463

[2007]

Winter Warmth and Safety: Home Energy Tips for Older Adults

Everyone appreciates a warm, comfortable home during the cold winter months. Yet with escalating energy costs many older Americans will find it a challenge to keep up with home heating bills this winter. Higher heating bills can be overwhelming. But with a little planning and preparation they don't have to be. The Eldercare Locator and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offer some economical ways to stay warm and safe at home. While it is best to take action before winter arrives, family gatherings during the holidays provide a great opportunity to discuss energy efficiency and winter safety.

Find out about financial energy assistance programs

- Many states, counties and cities provide programs that assist older adults with winter heating costs. Your local Area Agency on Aging is a good source of information about available community programs and eligibility requirements. To identify the Area Agency on Aging serving your community, contact the **Eldercare Locator at 800.677.1116** or www.eldercare.gov.
- Ask about the **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)** – the federally funded program that helps eligible low-income homeowners and renters meet their home heating needs. The name of this program and eligibility requirements may vary across states. Be mindful that there is an application deadline for assistance, except for emergency situations.

Depending on where you live, LIHEAP may offer one or more of the following types of help:

- Heating funds (i.e., fuel subsidies) to increase the affordability of home energy;
- Low-cost residential weatherization and other home repairs to safely increase the efficiency of a household's use of home energy, thus lowering energy bills and making homes more comfortable; and

- Energy crisis intervention to address weather-related and fuel supply shortages and other household energy-related emergencies, such as utility shutoffs.

For details about LIHEAP, contact: **866.674.6327** or www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap/grantees/states.html.

- Get information about the **Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)**. Most state and local governments receive federal funds to help low-income families permanently reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient. WAP assistance is free and preference is given to people over age 60 and households with children or people with disabilities. You must apply to determine eligibility.

WAP services are provided by local nonprofit agencies that employ energy professionals. They will thoroughly analyze your energy systems for safety and determine the most cost-effective energy upgrades for your home. This means that in addition to making minor repairs such as adding insulation, they will also check for hazards such as carbon monoxide, indoor air quality problems from mold and outdated electrical equipment and wiring.

To identify the WAP in your area, contact: **877.337.3463** or www.eere.energy.gov/weatherization/state_contacts.html

Be aware of help provided by utility companies

- Check with your gas, water and electricity suppliers to see if they offer a monthly budget plan to help spread out energy costs throughout the year. Often they have special heating assistance funds, as well as “no cut off” guidelines to avoid termination of service for older adults, people with disabilities and ill customers who may have difficulty paying their bills.

Utility companies are also a great source for energy conservation information. They might be able to refer you to an expert to inspect your home for ways to make it more energy efficient, or provide a list of contractors to tune up your furnace so that it operates at peak efficiency.

Look for ways to cut down on winter energy use

- The ENERGY STAR Program, run by the EPA and the Department of Energy, offers steps to follow to make your home more energy efficient (**888.782.7937** or www.energystar.gov). ENERGY STAR is a label that identifies and promotes energy-efficient products, including major appliances, office equipment, lighting, home electronics and more. These products can save about one third on energy bills without sacrificing features, style or comfort.

- Simple, inexpensive energy-saving things you can do yourself:

- Have a friend or relative seal air leaks. Weather strip and insulate the attic hatch or door to prevent warm air from leaking out of the house. Use storm windows or stretch window film to keep out drafts.
- Use an ENERGY STAR qualified programmable thermostat that can automatically adjust the temperature of your home when you are away.
- Prepare your furnace, boiler or heat pump for winter by having them professionally tuned-up in the Fall. Remember to change furnace filters at least every three months to keep warm air flowing.
- Although a log fire in your fireplace is attractive, it does not heat your home because heated air drafts up the chimney. When not using your fireplace, close the damper.



Ensure your health and safety

- In addition to addressing the need to stay warm during winter, consider safety as well. For example:
 - Avoid the risk of home fires. Do not use your stove or oven to heat your home. Keep batteries and battery-powered flashlights available. When needed, use flashlights instead of candles. Check to make sure that electrical cords on space heaters are not damaged and do not pose a tripping hazard.
 - Make sure that smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are installed and working properly. It is recommended that you replace the batteries at least once a year. As a reminder, pick a holiday or your birthday and replace the batteries each year on that day.
 - Insulate water pipes to avoid freezing and bursting. When freezing temperatures are expected leave water taps slightly open so they drip continuously. Drain and turn off outside water spouts.
 - Have a fire extinguisher ready to use. Fire extinguishers should be inspected at least once a year to assure they will operate effectively and safely when needed. Consult your telephone directory or local fire department for fire extinguisher service.

Have a back-up plan

- Before you need them, consider alternative arrangements should extreme weather conditions require emergency action.
 - Identify temporary living arrangements in case you are unable to stay in your own home and create a plan for getting there.
 - Keep in touch with family and friends. Ask someone to check on you daily—especially if you live alone.
 - Plan for your medical needs. Have extra medications on hand or identify a pharmacy that can deliver them to you.
 - If you or a loved one in your home has medical equipment, be sure you know how it will need to be maintained or moved in an emergency.
 - Share emergency contact information with everyone who would need it.