



Weatherstripping around your windows is a low-cost, easy-to-install solution to ensure warm air does not escape from your home.

PHOTO BY MARK GILLILAND/PIONEER UTILITY RESOURCES

Budget-Friendly Energy Efficiency

Q: I don't have a big budget for energy-efficiency upgrades. Do you have any budget-friendly energy-saving tips?

A: You don't need a lot of money to save on your energy bill. I have some suggestions that are low-cost, simple adjustments you can make in your home, whether you rent or own.

We all want to afford being comfortable in our homes. If you are having trouble paying your energy bills, you are not alone. The U.S. Energy Information Administration reports one in three households faces challenges meeting their energy needs. That's an estimated 37 million people making difficult decisions about what to go without to pay their energy bills.

Decreasing monthly bills and being more efficient at home is something we all should practice. Here are some budget-friendly energy-efficiency tips

targeting the biggest energy user: the heating system. Heating and cooling accounts for nearly half of a U.S. home's energy consumption.

Add Coziness to Your Home

One way you can feel warmer in your home without turning up the thermostat is by making your home cozy.

The way our bodies perceive the temperature of a room is based more on the surfaces in the room than the air temperature. In general, harder surfaces feel colder. For example, your tile floor will feel cooler than your fabric sofa.

Cold floors in a room make us feel colder. Adding an area rug to a hard-surface floor can make us feel warmer, even with the same setting on the thermostat.

The same goes for windows. Windows are typically the least-insulated surface in a room and can feel cold in winter months. Adding or closing curtains can help the room feel warmer.

Check Your Windows

Make sure windows are closed and locked. Locking windows pulls the sashes tighter together, reducing gaps that allow air to flow through and cause drafts. If your sash locks don't form a tight fit, adjust them or add weatherstripping.

A variety of window weatherstripping products are available for less than \$20. Most are simple to install and only require tools you likely already have around the house, such as scissors and a tape measure.

Some are more permanent solutions, and some are intended to be used for one heating season and then removed. Temporary solutions such as caulk strips, putty, pull-and-peel caulking or window insulation films can be used if you rent your home and can't make permanent changes.

Seal Your Doors

Weatherstripping doors is an easy do-it-yourself project. Make sure your doors seal tightly and don't allow drafts to pass around the edges or under the door.

Make sure any doors leading to an

CUT YOUR UTILITY BILLS

unheated space—outside or into a garage—are sealed tightly. If you can see light around the edges or underneath the door, or feel air movement when the door is closed, you are losing energy. Because doors need to open and close easily, expect to do a bit of adjusting after installing weatherstripping. If weatherstripping isn't installed correctly, it can make the door hard to close. Making it too loose defeats the purpose. You need to get it just right.

Close the Damper

If you have a fireplace, make sure the damper is completely closed when not using it. Leaving the damper open is like leaving a window open—it's just harder to see. The air you just paid to heat your home will go right out the chimney. The only exception: Some gas fireplaces need to remain open for gas fumes to exit. If you have a gas fireplace, check the owner's manual for more information on the damper position.

Layer Up

Dressing for the season prevents going overboard on your energy use. It can be tempting to adjust the thermostat to increase your comfort. Putting on a sweater or comfy sweatshirt can have the same comfort impact without increasing your energy use. Slippers can be a big help, too, especially when your feet touch a cold floor.

KPUD Energy Services Specialist Anita Clever, is available to assist you in locating programs focused on increasing your home's efficiency. Please call 509-773-5891 to schedule an appointment. ■



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