

REDUCE your winter energy BILLS

OUCC
Consumer
Tips

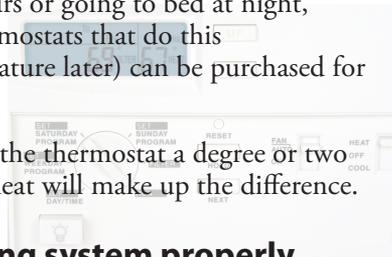


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Winter natural gas and electric bills can be very expensive as Hoosiers try to keep their homes and businesses warm. Several simple tips can help you use less energy and save money on your bills.

1 Start with your thermostat.

- Set the thermostat at the lowest comfortable temperature and dress in warm, layered clothing.
- When leaving your home for a few hours or going to bed at night, lower the thermostat a few degrees. Thermostats that do this automatically (and then reset the temperature later) can be purchased for as little as \$30.
- When entertaining friends, turn down the thermostat a degree or two before they arrive. The additional body heat will make up the difference.



2 Maintain your furnace and heating system properly.

- Older furnaces and those that are poorly maintained may run less efficiently, waste energy and cost you more money. A poorly maintained system can also be a safety hazard.
 - Change your furnace filter regularly.
 - Understand your manufacturer's recommended maintenance guidelines and follow them closely.
 - Have your furnace inspected regularly (for both safety and energy efficiency reasons), following your manufacturer's guidelines.
 - If you have a natural gas furnace, check the pilot light periodically. It should be a steady blue flame.
 - If your furnace has a built-in humidifier, use it. The extra humidity will make the air feel warmer.
 - Clean the vents regularly and keep them unblocked. Dusting the thermostat regularly can also help.

3 Draperies and ceiling fans help your heating system.

- Keep blinds, shades and draperies open during the day to allow sunlight in to warm your home or business (but close them at night for insulation purposes).
- Set ceiling fans to run clockwise. This will draw air up and keep warm air circulating. (During the summer, it is best to turn ceiling fans counter-clockwise to push air down and keep rooms cool.)

4 Proper insulation is critical.

- Make sure the attic, all exterior walls and floors are properly insulated, along with basements or crawl spaces (if applicable).
- Make sure your insulation carries the proper rating for the region you live in.
 - For houses in Indiana, the U.S. Department of Energy recommends ratings of R-38 to R-49 in ceilings and between R-18 and R-22 in walls.
 - More information is available at your local hardware store and from the Department of Energy's Insulation Fact Sheet (www.ornl.gov/roofs+walls/insulation).
- Check weather stripping, caulking and seals around doors and windows. Several small holes or cracks throughout your home can allow just as much warm air to escape as one open window.
- Use foam or plastic gaskets to insulate drafty electrical outlets along exterior walls.
- Indiana homeowners who add new insulation, weather stripping, storm doors/windows or double-pane windows may qualify for an insulation deduction of up to \$1000 on their state income taxes. For more information, see page 19 of the Indiana IT-40 Income Tax Booklet, available from the Indiana Department of Revenue (www.IN.gov/dor).
- A federal income tax credit will be available for home energy efficiency improvements made in 2006 and 2007. To learn more, visit www.energy.gov/taxbreaks.htm.

5 Adjust your water heater

- Set the temperature on your water heater at an appropriate level. 115 or 120 degrees should be warm enough to meet household needs.
- Put an insulation blanket or other type of insulation around your water heater. (However, read your owner's manual first to ensure that this will not create a hazard.)
- Insulate hot water pipes. By keeping the water warm, the water heater will not be required to do as much work.

important note:

Your utility's budget billing program can help you manage energy bills year-round. To learn more, please see the OUCC's "Understanding Natural Gas Prices" fact sheet. All OUCC publications are available online at www.IN.gov/OUCC or by calling 1-888-441-2494 (toll-free).

6 Shop around for energy-efficient appliances.

- Read the EnergyGuide label on any appliance you consider buying. This yellow and black label shows the appliance's estimated energy consumption, along with the estimated annual operating cost.
- Products with the Energy Star label (www.energystar.gov) operate well above minimum efficiency standards.

7 Use common sense.

- Do not use a gas stove as a heating source. More than being inefficient, it is extremely dangerous.
- If you use portable electric or kerosene heaters, be sure to use them carefully, keep them away from draperies and follow all of the manufacturer's instructions.

8 Lighting and landscaping matter.

- Use compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs, especially in light fixtures that are used for extended periods of time.
- CFL bulbs use as little as 1/4 the amount of electricity used by traditional incandescent bulbs, while creating the same amount of light.
- Although CFL bulbs are slightly more expensive, they save money in the long run because of their low electricity use and extra long life.
- Turn off lights in unoccupied rooms.
- Use a timer if you are planning to be away from home and want to have lights turned on for security reasons. Use Christmas lights only after dark and turn them off before going to bed.
- Turn off computers, TVs and other electronic devices when you are not using them. Use energy-saving options on computers and monitors.
- Landscaping, if done properly, can make your home more energy efficient year-round. The same trees that provide shade in the summer can make good windbreaks around your home or business in the winter.

For More Information:

- OUCC fact sheets on a number of utility topics are available at www.IN.gov/OUCC or by calling 1-888-441-2494 (toll-free).
- The U.S. Department of Energy's free Energy Savers booklet is available online (www.energysavers.gov) or by calling 1-800-363-3732.
- The Alliance to Save Energy offers free tips at www.powerisinyourhands.org.