

Marks Remarks by Mark Rowen Lincoln County Educator 10-12-07

The weather has cooled and now is the time to think about the upcoming heating season. Here are a few tips to save energy on the heating bills for winter.

Check the insulation in the attic. In this area recommendations are for R-49 in ceilings and R-19 in walls. If the attic has less than 6 inches of insulation it will need more. This cost alone may save as much as 10% on your heating bills. Insulating the heating air ducts from the furnace, especially in crawl spaces, can increase the warmth to those areas.

Water heaters are a large consumer of energy as well. Adding a water heater blanket can save energy, but also think of insulating the hot water pipes. These two types of investment can cut from 5-12% of the energy cost.

One of the easiest ways to save energy is to weather strip and caulk windows and cracks on the outside of the home. Any decrease in air infiltration can reduce heating cost. Adding storm windows and covering patio doors with a plastic insulating barrier on the inside can reduce heat loss thru these structures. Windows are one of the largest losses of heat from a home during winter months. Taking the time to reduce the loss by installing another air barrier can reduce heating bills.

Lastly but most important, have your heating system checked by a professional at the beginning of the season. This can reduce energy consumption by improving efficiency. Installing a programmable thermostat can reduce heat bills by lowering the temperature when nobody is home and raising it when you are. If your furnace is more than 20 years old, consider replacing with a more efficient model, or other type of heating source.

Most of these tips are simply common sense, but sometimes just a little reminder is good. Just replacing a regular 100 watt light bulb with a fluorescent bulb saves energy. A 40 watt fluorescent gives off the same amount of light as the 100 watt light bulb but uses less than half the energy. Every little bit of energy saving helps.

For more information about these and other topics contact the Lincoln County Extension office at 764-2756.