

# TIPS FOR CONSERVING ENERGY AND REDUCING YOUR UTILITY BILLS

This year, natural gas and electricity prices will be much higher than last year. Many families will experience great hardship because of this. **THERE WILL NOT BE ENOUGH MONEY FROM CHARITIES AND THE GOVERNMENT FOR EVERYBODY WHO NEEDS ASSISTANCE WITH UTILITY BILLS THIS WINTER!!!** Do everything you can to reduce your utility bills. Here are some simple and cheap ideas for doing this.

- ★ Lower your thermostat. Turn it down even more at night. During the day, dress for the season while indoors. Wear sweats, a sweater, warm socks, and maybe even a hat. Layer your clothes – several layers of loose clothes will help keep you warm. Clean clothes keep you warmer than dirty clothes. At night, put extra blankets on the bed. Wrap yourself in a blanket while reading or watching TV.
- ★ Put sheets of plastic over the outside of your windows. Staple it to the trim, and then nail thin pieces of wood around the edges to hold it securely in the wind.
- ★ Put two or three layers of bubble-wrap over the inside of the windows. Use a strong tape all the way around the edges to seal them tightly. If the window is still drafty, put a single sheet of plastic over the inside of the window in the same way as is recommended above for the outside of the windows.
- ★ Hang blankets underneath the curtains over the windows. Open the curtains and blankets during the sunny part of the day. Hang blankets over doors too. You can also duct tape two or three of those cheap auto sunshades together and hang them on the inside of your windows, shiny side in, to keep heat in the house.
- ★ Look for air leaks and plug them! Use a lighted incense stick and move it slowly around windows, doors, electrical outlets, places where pipes go through walls, etc. Use caulk for cracks around doors and windows. Use weather-stripping around doors so they close tightly. Wood putty or caulk can be used along baseboards. If the exterior of your house is brick, fill any breaks in the mortar with fresh mortar.
- ★ If you have central heating, change the filter. Wash clothes in cold water.
- ★ Don't pour warm or hot water down the drain! Put a stopper in the shower and let

the water cool before draining; do the same with cooking and dish water. Let the heat and humidity from the water help keep your house warm.

- ★ The sun is your friend in the winter. When the sun is shining, open curtains and let the sun shine in. If the sun can shine on some heavy masonry, like brick or concrete, so much the better. But as soon as the sun stops shining, close the curtains and hang up your blankets. Paint five gallon buckets black, and place them outside all day in the sun, and then bring them inside at night. They will slowly release the heat they gained. (Note: the buckets must have lids.) This trick also works with 2 liter bottles, such as pop bottles. You would need more bottles than buckets, but it is probably easier to find bottles. Often you can get 5 gallon buckets with tight fitting lids for free at restaurants and bakeries.
- ★ If your budget is severely restricted, heat only one room in the house, preferably one right next to the kitchen, and concentrate activities in the room.
- ★ Turn off the lights when you are not using them. Replace regular incandescent lights with compact fluorescent lights. Beware of “ghost loads”. Many televisions and other appliances are on all the time, even if you think they are “off”. Plug them into electric strips with on and off switches, and use the on and off switch to ensure they do not burn electricity when not in use.
- ★ Crockpots, electric frying pans, and toaster ovens are more efficient than full size electric stoves. Pressure cookers use less energy because foods cook faster. When you do heat up your oven, cook several dishes at once to save time and money. Uncovered pans can use 3 times as much energy to cook food as do covered pans. Use the smallest pan that will fit the recipe and use a burner the size of the pan (don’t use a small pan on a large burner if you can avoid it). Keep the metal splash guards under the burners clean, if they are dirty it will take more energy to cook the food.
- ★ Install low flow showerheads and faucet aerators, this can really cut the expense of hot water heating. Insulate the hot water tank. You can get jackets specially made for this or you can make your own out of insulation or reflectix (sold in home supply stores, it is like bubble wrap covered with aluminum foil). Do NOT cover the area where the burners vent if it is a gas hot water heater, do not cover the top, the bottom, or the thermostat.

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