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BUILDING YOUR NEXT HOME
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WARM FEELING

Heat Your Home Efficiently This Winter Season



SEAN FLOWER
President, Home Builders Association of St. Louis & Eastern Missouri

AS TEMPERATURES DROP THIS WINTER SEASON, one thing inevitably rises — your home fueling costs. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), families spend on average \$1,400 a year on home utility bills — with home heating and cooling making up 46 percent of the cost. With this winter's forecast, ensuring your home is energy-wise is essential for your comfort and budget.

Here are some ways that you can keep the cold out and the costs down this winter:

- Caulk and seal air leaks in your house. By reducing air leaks, an average household can cut 10 percent of their monthly energy bill. While sealing windows and doors can help, usually the worst culprits are utility cut-throughs for pipes (plumbing penetrations), unfinished spaces behind cupboards and closets, and gaps around chimneys and recessed lights.
- Check your insulation. The DOE recommends you check and replace insulation in your home if you:
 - **Have a home built before 1980**
 - **Are uncomfortably cold in the winter**
 - **Build an extension or new addition onto your home**
 - **Pay high energy bills**

The places to check include the attic, ceilings, exterior walls, basement walls and crawlspaces. When replacing insulation, look at the R-value of the product — the higher the R-value, the better. If you cannot afford to replace the insulation in all areas of your home, choose the attic as it is the most cost-effective. For attic insulation, make sure the R-value falls between 30 and 60.

Upgrade your thermostat. You can easily lower electricity bills by choosing to upgrade to a programmable thermostat, which automatically lowers the heat at night or when you are not home, which can save up to 10 percent on your annual heating bill.

Perform routine maintenance. Clean or replace filters on furnaces once a month, or as indicated by the manufacturer. Make sure radiators, baseboard heaters and warm-air registers are clean of debris and are not being blocked by furniture or draperies.

As an added benefit, some energy-efficient improvements may qualify for a federal tax credit. Find more information about what qualifies at www.nahb.org/efficiencytaxcredit.

These are just the tip of the iceberg. For more tips on how to efficiently heat your home, as well as guidelines based on your type of home and climate, visit DOE's Web site at www.energysavers.gov.

