

Boost home's energy efficiency

By Susan Tauber-Hyke
special writer

REMEMBER ALL the press and celebrations focusing on Earth Day last April 22? We heard and read how and why we should do it all the time.

Mother Earth is getting ready to put us to the ultimate test to see if we paid any attention on Earth Day. What's the test, you ask? Another Michigan winter.

Passing the test means making your residence as energy efficient as possible for the upcoming winter. Regardless of what type of house, condominium or apartment you live in, you want your place to use as little energy as possible so you can be kind to both our planet and to your budget.

There are several things to do to prepare your home for the cold Michigan months. Some of the things are simple and only take a few minutes of your time. Some require complex procedures. Some are inexpensive; others are costly.

It's up to you to decide how energy efficient you want your home to be. Just keep in mind that the more energy conservation practices you follow, the more comfortable your home will be this winter.

OFFICIALS FROM both Consumers Power and Detroit Edison have general

hints for surviving the winter without costing you and their energy reserves a fortune.

"Let the sun shine in when it's cold outdoors," said Kenneth Aho, Edison energy conservation specialist. "That way, you are using solar energy to help heat your house to a habitable temperature."

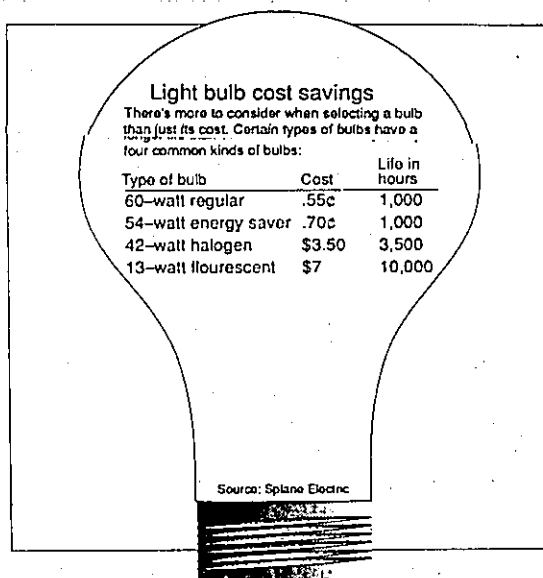
Aho had other general tips, such as dialing down your thermostat when no one is home for several hours, changing furnace filters at least once a month and making sure there's enough insulation where it should be.

He recommended not using an open-hearth fireplace to heat your home. If you have an unused room, close the door and block its heat register.

Dick Kravick, Consumers Power residential marketing services superintendent for metro Detroit, suggested adding glass-door fire screens to all fireplaces, having a minimum of double-glazed windows or storm windows and installing storm doors if you don't have an insulated outside door.

Both Detroit Edison and Consumers Power are concerned with insulation, ventilation and caulking. Edison has a home insulation program with low financing available. Call 1-800-482-2983.

Please turn to Page 4



Electrical

"There are many ways to save watts of electricity and money at the same time," said Gene Beres of Detroit-based Splane Electric Supply, which has stores in Livonia, Madison Heights and Van Buren Township.

"You have to remember that every time you save a watt of electricity, you save money. You may have to spend \$50 on light bulbs in order to save money in the long run, but the expenditure will reduce your electric bill every month and increase the life of your light bulbs."

Beres, in charge of lighting outside sales, says consumers can use a formula for computing savings on various light bulbs.

He says to multiply the hours a bulb burns per day times 365 days times the watts saved by going to a lower wattage bulb times the kilowatt amount that Detroit Edison charges per hour, about 10-cents per hour (use .0001 in the formula). Then by comparing what each bulb costs and its life expectancy, you'll discover how much you are saving with the different bulbs.

"There are different kinds of light bulbs, called lamps, available on today's market," Beres said. "An incandescent light bulb is the regular bulb. There are different kinds of watt-saving bulbs that use a lower wattage to produce the same amount of light."

"Examples are General Electric's Watt-Miser and Sylvania's Super Saver. Then there's the halogen bulb (Sylvania's Capsylite) and the

Please turn to Page 4

Plumbing

Plumbing equipment is among the largest energy users in a house, said Tom Leckie, vice president of Bergstrom Plumbing in Livonia. He's talking about toilets, shower heads and hot water heaters. And he has suggestions for making them kinder to the environment.

Most of his suggestions mean new equipment, however, because older equipment uses more water and energy to do the same amount of work as newer equipment.

"Toilets made prior to 1980, for example, use 5½ gallons of water per flush," Leckie said. "Newer energy-saving toilets use 3½ gallons or less per flush. Some use one gallon or less."

"If you add up how many times your toilets are flushed in your house a day times the amount of water saved, the savings can be quite significant. You can try adjusting the float in your existing toilet so it needs less water but new toilets are worth purchasing."

The same is true of shower heads. Older shower heads were made to use 5 gallons of water per minute, Leckie said. New ones are redesigned to use 1½ to 2½ gallons per minute.

"The new ones save you two ways — by the amount of water saved and by the energy saved by not having to heat up the extra water in your water heater," Leckie said.

LECKIE ADDED that you can put a flow restrictor on an old shower head but results may be an unsatisfactory shower.

Please turn to Page 4

Heating

Fred Angell, service manager for S&M Heating and Sales in Southfield, suggested four things people can do to save energy:

- Use a programmable thermostat.
- Install a humidifier.

● Have the furnaces cleaned every winter and the air conditioner cleaned every spring.

● Change their furnace filters once a month without fail.

"Programmable thermostats are necessary, particularly when people are out of the house for long periods of time," he said.

The best ones, he said, are made by White Rodgers and by Honeywell.

"Some of them are really incredible. They come with a brain. After they've been on a wall for 24 hours, they know how long it takes to bring the temperature up or down to a certain level, so they will preempt the program and tell the furnace when to turn on."

"This way, the furnace won't kick on at the time programmed; it will already have the house at the temperature you want it to be at that certain time."

Angell calls a humidifier "totally necessary. You want the moisture in the air during the cold months."

"Just think about what it's like in the summer when it's hot out with low humidity compared with what it's like at the same temperature but with a higher humidity. You feel the heat more with the increased humidity. That's what you want in your home in the cold months."

Please turn to Page 4

Windows

Windows can be either a friend or a foe during the winter, depending on what kind you have. If they are wood or vinyl windows, they are your friend.

Aluminum windows? Foe, said Gary Weston, president of Weston Window Replacement in Plymouth, Hartland and Gaylord.

"Energy costs were inexpensive when aluminum windows came out so they were widely used," Weston said.

"However, the aluminum frame actually conducts heat and cold air. It doesn't help keep it inside your home."

What can one do to help the situation? Replace the windows with either wood or vinyl frame windows, which would cost about \$5,600 to \$8,700 for an average-size colonial house. Or, if that is too costly, use plastic window coverings over the entire window and frame to keep the heat in, Weston said.

"It's really best to replace with good windows if you can. They help increase the value of your house while you save on energy costs and have the use of the windows while you live there. You can save 20-30 percent of your energy costs if you replace aluminum windows with vinyl or wood."

"Storm windows don't help solve problem with aluminum frames, either. All storm windows do is help decrease the ice buildup on your windows."

If you do replace your windows, he recommends buying Type E glass. "This type of glass blocks out the sun's ultraviolet rays so it keeps houses cooler in the summer and reflects the heat back into houses in the winter," Weston said.