

# Here's a winter-ready energy checklist

By Gerald Frawley  
staff writer

**A**S IF life weren't busy enough, there's still 101 things that have to be done before the weather turns cold:

● FURNACES

- Before that first cold snap, turn your thermostat on and set the temperature on high to see if the furnace goes on. It's better to find out that the furnace is broken now, than in the middle of the night in November.
- Filters should be replaced every two months during use.
- The blower unit needs to be oiled at least once every year.
- Most heating and cooling specialists recommend cleaning at least every two years.

● WINDOWS

- Air infiltration through windows is one of the greatest causes of heat loss. An eighth of an inch crack around an average size window is the same thing as having a 4-by-6-inch hole in the wall.
- Caulking should be applied around the exterior of window frames where the frame meets the home and anywhere else two different materials or parts of the house meet.

- Weatherstripping should be applied around the perimeter of window sashes.
- Plastic sheeting and shrink rap kits that cover windows can be used to reduce air infiltration.

● DOORS

- Caulking should be applied around the exterior of door frames where the frame meets the home.
- Weatherstripping should be applied around the perimeter of window sashes.
- Doors don't leak only around the frames; substantial heat is lost through air infiltration at the bottom of the door. Check to see if there's a draft. If there is, replace the threshold or buy a threshold shield, which attaches to the bottom of the door.
- Time to buy a new door? Make sure it's a solid insulated core door. If the doors have glass panels, make sure they're insulated glass panels. Many exterior doors have magnetic seal weatherstripping, which helps prevent heat loss.

● MISCELLANEOUS

- Although water heater tanks are already insulated, some people prefer to add a water heater blanket, especially in homes where the water heater is in an unheated basement,

garage or cellar.

It's also a good idea to clean the heat reflector below the hot-water heating element so it will reflect heat better.

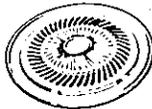
- Water in exposed pipes or pipes in crawl spaces can freeze quickly in bitter cold, causing them to burst. Foam pipe forms and fiberglass wraps eliminate this problem.
- Ambient heat from the furnace ducts may heat the basement, but that's not what they were designed for. Fiberglass duct wraps prevent the loss of heat meant for the living areas.

- Remember the eighth-inch crack that's really a 4-by-6-inch hole? Well the damper is much larger than that and literally hundreds of dollars in heat go up the chimney every winter. Make sure it's closed, and if possible, install an insulated, glass fireplace door that prevents heat loss.

- Though not as great a problem as windows, there's air infiltration through electric outlets. Fiberglass and foam outlet insulators placed behind outlet plates can reduce heat loss.

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