

Energy matters: Give your home a winter tune-up

With shorter days and colder nights, a person's fancy turns to thoughts of energy matters, of course!

Producing and using energy both contribute to environmental problems—urban smog, acid rain, polluted waters, even the dangers of global warming. And wasted energy means wasted money. There are so many reasons to use energy wisely. To help you along, here are a few tips from the On-

tario Ministry of Environment and Energy to give your home a winter tune-up and make it more energy efficient.

1. Half or more of your household energy dollars go into home heating. One way of keeping those energy dollars inside the home is to install a programmable, or "set-back" thermostat. It lets you customize the heat in your home to match the way you live, turning down the temperature when you

are sleeping, turning it back up in the morning—all automatically!

2. Be a draft detective! Unwanted air leakage in a home can make up a large portion of your heating bill. A piece of tissue paper pinned to a clothes hanger makes a handy draft detector. Hold it up to windows, doors, electrical outlets, baseboards, exterior mail slots and any other likely places for drafts. Watch for the tell-tale movement of the plastic. Make a

note of all those drafty spots and work out a plan to fix them.

3. Weatherstripping windows and exterior doors not only reduces your heating bills but also makes your home more comfortable, ridding it of nasty drafts. There are many types of weatherstripping available. Your local hardware or building supply store can help you choose the right weatherstripping for your needs.

4. Does your home have a through-the-door mail slot? If it does, you are letting in more than the mail! Mail slots and milk boxes (common in older homes) are a source of drafts and air leakage. Replacing the mail slot with an outdoor mail box means you won't be accepting deliveries of cold air!

5. Fireplace flues are an easy escape route for your heating dollars. Make sure that the flue damper is closed when the fireplace is not in use. And if you're not planning to use the fireplace, think about putting in a flue plug.

6. Caulking around your win-

dows stops drafts from coming into the house and warm air from escaping out of the house. A few dollars invested now in easy-to-use materials can bring big paybacks in energy savings this winter—up to \$10-20 per window. And remember, many of the things you do to keep out winter's cold will also stand you in good stead during the hot summer months by helping to keep your home cooler.

7. The second largest consumer of your energy dollars—after home heating—is your hot water heater. By installing a low-flow shower head you can help conserve water and help yourself to up to \$80 in energy savings each year!

8. A hot water faucet that drips one drop per second can drive you crazy. It can also waste as much as 9,600 litres of water per year, water which you paid \$24 to heat. A few minutes making the repair will prevent our precious resources and your energy dollars from going down the drain.

9. Make sure that you get the most out of your hot water heater. Insulate the first two metres of hot water line coming out of your tank, as well as the first metre of cold water pipe going into the tank. Use preformed insulating pipe wrap and, for safety's sake, keep the pipe wrap at least 15 cm away from the flue on a gas hot water heater.

10. Now that daylight hours are fewer and lights are burning longer each day, it's a good time to think about switching to compact fluorescent light bulbs. They are available in a variety of styles for both indoor and outdoor use, last up to 10 times as long and use about one quarter of the energy of ordinary incandescent bulbs. So while they cost more to buy, they save you money in the not-so-long run.

11. Motion-sensitive exterior lighting is a bright idea for many reasons. Not only will it light the way when you or visitors arrive and frighten away unwanted visitors, it will also save energy.

12. Leaving a window air conditioner in place and uncovered during the winter is a sure way to lose heat and waste energy. Cover it up—or even better, remove it completely and store it in the basement or garage.

13. Many people don't know it, but you can lose a lot of heat through those electrical outlets and switches located on walls to the outside. Foam gaskets, which cost about 50 cents each, can be installed in a jiffy and make all the difference. Just be sure to turn off the power to the switch or outlet at the electrical panel before starting work!

There are so many things that you can do around the house which are simple, inexpensive and can put you on the path to energy conservation in no time. And—as everyone knows—that's good for you and the environment!

You can phone 1-800-5654-4923 or write to the Ontario Ministry of Environment and Energy for free "how-to" information on conserving energy in and around the home.

So have a great winter, and remember—energy matters!

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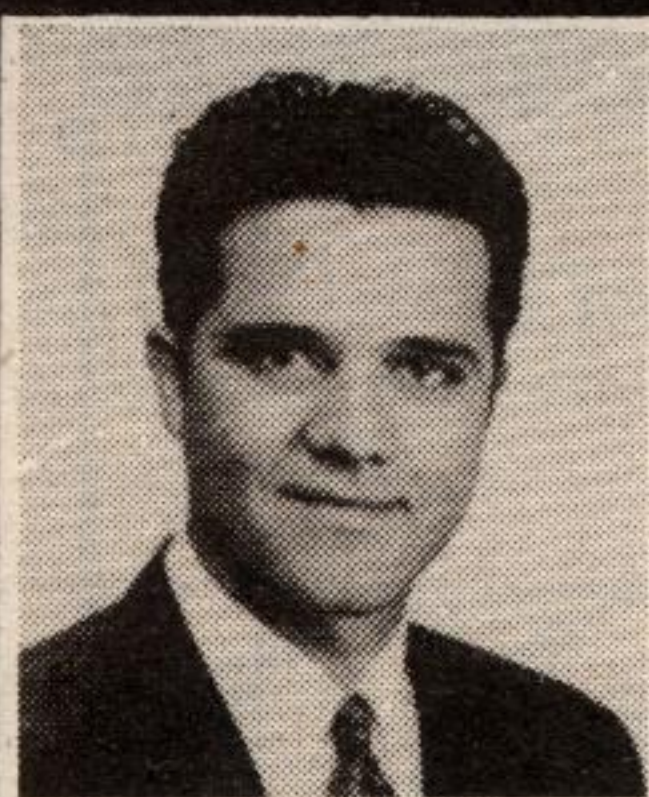
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