

How much do you know about energy conservation?

RE3—The Canadian Champion, Wednesday January 8.

Are you an energy wise homeowner? Try this quiz to find out.

1. When insulation work is undertaken, it is important to meet or exceed the recommended thermal resistance values. Can you match the value or range of values listed below to the correct area?

- a) RSI 4.7 (R 27)
 - b) RSI 2.2 (R 13)
 - c) RSI 4.7 to 7.1 (R 27 to 40)
 - d) RSI 3.0 to 4.5 (R 17 to 26)
- 1) roof or ceiling
2) floor over unheated spaces
3) frame walls
4) basement walls

2. True or false?

a) The thermal resistance value of insulation is based solely on thickness. 25 millimetres of any type of insulation will always insulate as well as 25 millimetres of another.

b) Increasing insulation is always the

first step homeowners should take to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. It's the best investment for your energy conservation dollar.

c) Fluorescent light use 60 to 75 per cent less energy to produce the same amount of light as incandescent bulbs - and last longer.

d) For each degree you set your thermostat above 20 C (on a 24-hour basis), your fuel consumption will increase an average of 5 per cent.

e) Caulking materials are all the same. Any one type can seal the different joints in your house as well as another, so it makes sense to buy the least costly product.

f) Because hot air rises, insulating the attic will generally make a house passably energy efficient.

Answers:

1. a)-2; b)-4; c)-1; d)-3

2. a) False. The thermal resistance of insulation is not based solely on its thickness. It is measured in RSI (metric) or R (imperial). The higher the RSI or R value, the better the material insulates. In some cases, two millimetres of one type of insulation can have a lower thermal resistance value than one millimetre of another material.

b) False. No single efficiency measure will always be most appropriate in every case. Assess the air leakage in your home, existing levels of insulation and the condition of the heating system before beginning an energy conservation program.

c) True. Small energy saving measures like changing from incandescent to fluorescent fixture can really add up.

d) True. And the reverse is also true: for each degree you set your thermostat below 20 C on a 24-hour basis, fuel consumption will drop by about 5 per cent.

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e) False. Some caulking materials are safe or appropriate only for use outside. Others are designed for special applications, such as areas subject to high moisture levels. Some materials dry clear and others can be painted over after they are dry. It is always best to choose carefully as many materials as required for the applications you have planned. Inexpensive caulking materials may not be very durable or effective.

f) False. Heat moves in many directions - up, down or sideways - as long as it's moving from a warm spot to a colder one. Attic insulation will help improve the energy efficiency of your home but by itself will not make your home energy efficient. Other measures, such as comprehensive draftproofing and basement wall insulation, also warrant serious consideration.

What to look for in a furnace tune-up

Just as with the family car, your oil or gas-fired heating system can serve you more efficiently and cheaply if it is well tuned and maintained. To help keep heating bills under control, an oil furnace should be serviced annually and a natural gas system every two or three years.

To be sure you get a complete job, specify what you want when booking a service call. When the serviceperson arrives, take time to discuss any particular problems you may have noticed and clearly outline the work you expect to be done. Some items that should be included in a thorough servicing of your oil or gas forced-air system:

1) a visual inspection, interior and exterior of the heating and

venting system;

2) inspection and cleaning of flue pipe and chimney base;

3) for natural gas equipment, inspection, testing and cleaning of burner and pilot;

4) heat exchanger inspection;

5) inspection and cleaning of air circulation fan motor and filters, and adjustment of belt and lubrication of motor if appropriate;

6) check of ducts, humidifier and fan temperature settings to assess efficiency of distribution system;

7) on oil-fired systems, an efficiency test if there has not been one in two or three years;

8) inspection and cleaning of damper, draft controller and stack controller.

Additional items for oil furnaces only:

9) replace in-line oil filter;

10) burner maintenance, including check of electrical connections and ignition electrodes, replacement of oil nozzle, cleaning burner fan motor, inspection of pump and check of safety controls; and

11) check of thermostat for accuracy of settings and a check of the distribution system to make sure the air flows are balanced; these checks are valuable for savings and comfort.

When the job is finished, the serviceperson should clean up and give you a written record of what has been done and any recommendations for further work. With regular professional care, your heating system can give you cheaper service.

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