

How to maximize energy savings throughout the winter

By Scott McGillivray

(NC) As temperatures decrease during the fall and winter months, energy usage and costs tend to climb. These are five of the most important energy-saving tips for the comfort of your family—and your wallet:

1. **Adjust your thermostat.** Lower the heat on your thermostat while you are away from home and before you go to bed. Better yet, invest in a programmable thermostat, so you don't have to give it a second thought.
2. **Seal gaps around windows and doors.** Cracks and gaps around windows and doors can let cold drafts into your home. Weather-stripping or caulking will seal these problem areas and keep your home warmer, without having to turn up the heat.
3. **Insulate well against the cold.** Add insulation to your basement walls, headers or attic to make a noticeable difference in the temperature of your home and its energy consumption. A stone wool product specifically designed for thermal performance, such as Roxul Comfortbatt, is ideal. This type of batt insulation will also provide protection from fire, moisture, and unwanted noise. Adding insulation is one of the simplest and most-cost effective ways to increase home energy efficiency.
4. **Make use of natural sources of heat.** Pull back your curtains to let natural light in. The sun can help to warm a room with its rays on a bright fall or winter day. If there are any large windows in your home that don't receive much sunlight, keep the curtains closed to form a barrier from the cold.
5. **Use ceiling fans to your advantage.** In the winter, set the fan to rotate clockwise. The blades will pull the air up and around, redirecting warm air that rises back down into the living space. The effect can help you lower your thermostat by two degrees in the winter.

While cutting back on energy may seem more challenging as the weather gets colder, it doesn't have to be. There are many no- or low-cost methods to conserve energy that can provide consistent savings over time.

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