

Did you know that New England's weather and climate is one of the most varied in the world? As New Englanders, we've learned to adapt to extreme seasonal fluctuations in temperature, from very hot to icy cold, and, over the years, have endured droughts, heavy rainfall, hurricanes, tornadoes, blizzards and more. These great weather variations are influenced by many factors including New England's physical geographical setting, its latitude and its coastal orientation.

Preparing your home to weather these extreme conditions, while at the same time maximizing its energy efficiency and improving its comfort level, is easy and cost-effective if you follow these simple monthly tips. Remember, your initial investment in energy-saving measures can result in a lifetime of savings! And, with home weatherization emerging as a top national priority in the country's efforts to reduce our nation's energy consumption and cut energy costs, making these improvements will pay-off in spades when it's time to sell your home.



Energy Efficiency Calendar

January

- ✓ Use caulk or weather stripping to seal up any air leaks from window frames, baseboards, electrical outlet and switch plates, wall- or window-mounted air conditioners, and other openings, such as pipes and wiring coming through ceilings, floors, and walls.
- ✓ Use heavy drapes to help insulate your home from cold & drafty windows.
- ✓ Use a throw rug or door stop to keep warm air in and cold air out.
- ✓ Make sure your fireplace damper is closed when not in use. Consider installing a glass fire screen or top sealing chimney cap.
- ✓ Replace at least three incandescent light bulbs with energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs.



May

- ✓ Check and replace furnace and central air filters as needed.
- ✓ Refresh, replace and add to attic insulation to ensure efficient heating and cooling of home.
- ✓ If you have central air-conditioning, keep the condenser unit's coils and fins clean. Remove grass, leaves, and other debris that may collect on them.
- ✓ Perform bi-annual cleaning of clutter around your boiler/furnace.
- ✓ Clean out your dryer vent hose to minimize risk of fire.
- ✓ Fix leaky faucets.
- ✓ Install low-flow shower heads.
- ✓ Replace at least three incandescent light bulbs with energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs.



August

- ✓ Inspect, seal and insulate air ducts to ensure adequate air flow and to eliminate any loss of heated or cooled air.
- ✓ Insulate hot water pipes and wrap your hot-water storage tank with an insulation blanket, even if it's a newer model.
- ✓ Wrap with insulation any hot-water pipes that pass through unheated spaces. For steam pipes, use non-foam insulation, as foam can melt.
- ✓ Place reflectors between walls and radiators to reduce heat lost into exterior walls.
- ✓ Replace cracked window panes.
- ✓ Clean refrigerator condenser coils.



February

- ✓ Schedule a Home Energy Audit, which uses state-of-the-art diagnostic equipment to record and quantify a home's energy "shortcomings" and overall health.
- ✓ Install storm windows and exterior doors. For older windows, use a plastic window kit to cut drafts and seal in heat. When purchasing new windows and doors, look for the ENERGY STAR label.
- ✓ Clean refrigerator condenser coils to ensure it's working as efficiently as possible.



June

- ✓ Prepare southern-exposure windows to let in the sun's natural warmth and light.
- ✓ Review your previous winter's oil consumption to begin planning for next winter.
- ✓ Enroll in the home heating oil price plan that best suits your needs and budget.
- ✓ Clean refrigerator condenser coils.
- ✓ Set your air conditioner to no cooler than 78 degrees. Setting your air conditioner lower than 78 degrees can increase your costs by up to 40 percent.
- ✓ If you have central air, block the vents in unoccupied rooms.
- ✓ Clean or replace air conditioner filters at least once a month during the cooling season.
- ✓ Purchase energy efficient fans. Fans use far less energy than air conditioners and often can provide the same cooling effect.
- ✓ Alternate the use of air-conditioning and fans. When you're comfortable, shut down your air conditioner and turn on the fan. This approach can cut air conditioner use by up to 40 percent.
- ✓ Shade windows that face south, east, and west. Keeping windows, drapes, and shades closed during the day helps keep unwanted heat out of your home. About 40 percent of unwanted heat comes in through windows.



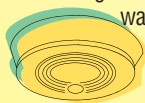
July - Think Winter!

March — Think Summer!

- ✓ Inspect and clean your air conditioner or cooling system. A well-maintained unit uses less electricity. Switching to high-efficiency air conditioners and reducing your air-conditioning use can cut your cooling costs by 20 to 50 percent.
- ✓ Install a programmable thermostat.
- ✓ Install a whole-house fan in your attic to draw cool air inside through windows and force hot air out through attic vents.
- ✓ Ensure your property has healthy trees, which can help shade your home in summer and help rid the air of harmful carbon emissions.
- ✓ Install ceiling fans, particularly in homes with tall ceilings to cool homes in summer and to recirculate the hot air that rises in winter.
- ✓ Replace at least three incandescent light bulbs with energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs.

April — Earth Day 4/22!

- ✓ Clean gutters and downspouts to ensure proper water drainage away from your home's foundation and roof.
- ✓ Replace batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- ✓ Clean refrigerator condenser coils.
- ✓ Air seal around recessed lights
- ✓ Clean out attic and basement.



September

- ✓ Remove air conditioning units from windows or cover tightly.
- ✓ Replace at least three incandescent light bulbs with energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs.

October



- ✓ Clean refrigerator condenser coils.
- ✓ Clean out attic and basement.
- ✓ Close doors and warm-air vents in unused rooms, but in extreme cold be aware of water pipes that could freeze and burst.
- ✓ Use an efficient humidifier to maintain comfortable humidity levels and help you conserve heat. Proper humidity helps you feel comfortable without turning up the heat.

November

- ✓ Drain all hoses, outdoor faucets and sprinkler systems before the freeze.
- ✓ Check and clean gutters and downspouts to ensure proper water drainage away from your home's foundation and roof.
- ✓ Replace batteries in smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.



- ✓ Replace at least three incandescent light bulbs with energy efficient compact fluorescent light bulbs.

December

- ✓ Invest in energy-saving LED holiday lights for an 88% savings on your electric bill.





Here are some additional tips for year-round energy efficiency!

Make energy efficiency a family affair by including your children in the process. Let them know how much energy costs, and that small changes can make a big difference when it comes to energy consumption!

HEATING

■ Heating is the largest energy user for homes in our region of the country. Increasing the efficiency of your heating system is the most effective way to save money and reduce your home's contribution to climate change. When buying a new furnace or boiler, be sure to look for the ENERGY STAR label.

■ Health permitting, set your thermostat to 68 degrees during the day and 60 degrees at night and when no one is home. Each degree over 68 can increase by three percent the amount of energy you use for heating.

■ Install a programmable thermostat and program it to turn down the heat at night and when no one is home.

■ Lowering the thermostat 10 to 15 degrees for eight hours a day can save you up to 15 percent a year on your heating bills.

■ Keep warm-air vents clean.

■ If you have a hot-water heating system, release any trapped air from radiators.

■ Wrap insulation around any hot-air ducts that pass through unheated spaces.

■ Clean or replace filters for your hot-air furnace and heat-pump every month during the heating season or use filters made to run 6 to 12 months before needing replacement.

■ Keep drapes or furniture away from radiators and baseboard heaters so heat can flow freely.

■ If your windows are well-insulated, open the curtains on sunny days in the winter months and close them at night to keep the heat in.

COOLING

■ Set your air conditioner to no cooler than 78 degrees. Setting your air conditioner lower than 78 degrees can increase your costs by up to 40 percent.

■ Don't air-condition an empty room.

■ Turn your air conditioner off when you leave home.

■ Install a programmable thermostat or use a timer to turn on your air conditioner a half hour before you return home rather than having it run all day.

■ Clean or replace air conditioner filters at least once a month during the cooling season.

■ Shade windows that face south, east, and west. Keeping windows, drapes, and shades closed during the day helps keep unwanted heat out of your home. About 40 percent of unwanted heat comes in through windows.

■ Don't run your air conditioner when the outdoor temperature is below 70 degrees. Open the windows instead.

■ When buying a room air conditioner, make sure it is properly sized. A larger-than-needed air conditioner cycles on and off more frequently, reducing its efficiency. Frequent cycling makes indoor temperatures fluctuate more and creates a less comfortable environment.

■ Install your air conditioner in a shady area, if possible.

WATER

■ Next to heating or cooling, water heating is typically the largest energy user in the home. To conserve energy, conserve hot water.

■ Set your water heater no higher than 120 degrees Fahrenheit or about midway between the low and medium settings.

■ If appropriate, consider a demand water heater that has no storage tank. It can reduce your energy use by 10 to 15 percent.

■ Insulate hot-water pipes wherever possible.

■ Take showers rather than baths. Showers generally use half as much hot water as baths.

■ Take shorter showers.

■ Plan on buying an energy efficient water heater before your old one fails. If your gas water heater is more than 10 years old, it may be operating at less than 50 percent efficiency.

LIGHTING

■ Lighting accounts for 5 to 10 percent of total energy use in the average home. Consider the advantages of energy-efficient alternatives. Use ENERGY STAR-qualified compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs). They use less than 25 percent of the electricity standard bulbs use and last 10 times longer. When they do burn out, recycle them! Bring your expired CFLs to any Home Depot or IKEA for free recycling.

■ Shut off all lights when you leave a room.

■ During the day, let daylight do the work and turn off lights near windows.

■ Instead of brightly lighting an entire room, focus the light where you need it.

■ Use bright lights only where you read or work. Otherwise, use 25- or 40-watt bulbs. Three-way lamps make it easier to keep lighting low when brighter light isn't necessary.

■ Keep bulbs and fixtures clean.

■ Use night lights when a little light is enough.

■ When you go away, use timers to turn your lights on and off.

■ Use outdoor lights with a photocell and motion sensor so they go on only at night and when someone is present.

APPLIANCES

■ Consider energy efficiency when buying new appliances and electronics. While energy-efficient products may be more expensive to buy, over their life they can save you about 30 percent on your energy bill.

■ Choose ENERGY STAR-qualified appliances, which use 10 to 50 percent less electricity than standard models. A list of ENERGY STAR products is available at <http://www.energystar.gov>

■ Use the energy-saving setting for all appliances, particularly your refrigerator, air conditioner, washing machine, dryer, and dishwasher.

■ Unplug appliances and equipment when not in use, including TVs, cable boxes, computers, and monitors.

■ Plug home entertainment and computer equipment into power strips. This way, it's one easy switch to turn them on and off.

■ Set your computer to "hibernate" when not in use for 30 minutes.

■ Turn off your monitor when you leave your computer for more than 20 minutes. Screen savers use electricity.

■ Unplug cell phone, MP3 players, and PDA chargers when not in use. They use electricity, even when they aren't charging.

■ Set your refrigerator to 40 degrees – but no higher – and freezer to 0 degrees.

■ Make sure your refrigerator is the right size for your needs. Bigger isn't better.

■ Loosely store food in the refrigerator so air can circulate around it.

■ In the freezer, pack items tightly. If there's extra space, add bags of ice.

■ Open the refrigerator and freezer doors only when necessary.

■ Install your refrigerator away from the stove, radiator, heating duct, or direct sunlight, if possible.

■ Make sure the refrigerator and freezer doors shut tightly and have a good seal.

■ Allow hot food to cool before storing in the refrigerator or freezer. But be sure to refrigerate or freeze hot foods within two hours of purchase or preparation, or within one hour if the air temperature is above 90 degrees.

■ Cover liquids in the refrigerator. Uncovered liquids make the refrigerator work harder.

■ Think about replacing your old refrigerator. Some older models may cost up to 50 percent of your monthly bill.

■ Scrape dishes before placing them in the dishwasher and only run it when it's full.

■ Use the "soak" or "prewash" dishwasher setting only for burned-on or dried-on food; use the "air dry" feature on your dishwasher or on older machines; prop open the door after the final rinse cycle.

■ Use your clothes washer only when it is full.

■ Wash your clothes in cold water.

■ Clean the lint filter in the clothes dryer before each load.

■ Don't over dry your clothes, and use the moisture sensor if your machine has one. If not, consider replacing your old clothes dryer with a new energy efficient model with a moisture sensor. This feature can reduce your drying time by up to 15 percent and extend the life of your clothes.

■ Dry heavy and light fabrics separately.

■ Dry two or more loads in a row to take advantage of the heat from the first load.

■ In the summer months, run your washing machine, dryer, and dishwasher early or at night when it's generally cooler.

COOKING

■ When it's time to cook in the summer months, grill outside and keep your oven off.

■ Use a microwave rather than an electric or gas oven as much as possible. Microwaves use less than half the power of traditional ovens.

■ For certain recipes that require long cooking times, use a Crock-Pot.

■ Use copper-bottom pots and pans. They heat up faster than regular pans.

■ When baking, preheat your oven no more than five to eight minutes ahead of time.

■ When broiling or roasting, don't preheat your oven.

■ Don't open the oven door more than necessary. Every time you open the door, the oven loses 25 to 50 degrees.

■ Cook as much of your meal as possible at one time in the oven.

■ You can turn the oven temperature down 25 degrees when using glass or ceramic pans. The cooking time will remain the same.

■ Use the self-cleaning oven feature right after you've used the oven to cook a meal – while it's still hot. Try not to use this feature too often.