Reducing Heat Loss in Your Home

Heating is one of the biggest utility expenses faced by homeowners (or renters). Fortunately, there are many steps that can help to reduce heating costs, and make your home more comfortable during the cold months of the year. While a few of these recommndations are expensive and perhaps not feasible in some cases, many are simple and will only take a few minutes of your time.

I) Install overhead and sidewall insulation. Adequate insulation is one of the most important factors in reducing heat loss and will increase the comfort of your home in both summer and winter. Under most conditions you should have the equivalent of 6 inches of fiberglass thermal insulation over your top floor ceiling. 3.5 to 4 inches of sidewall insulation is also recommended.

2) Weatherstrip and caulk around all joints and frames of windows and doors.

3) Install energy-efficient insulating glass windows and doors. In older houses, storm windows may still be used. If upgrading windows is not practical, clear plastic window insulating kits greatly cut down on drafts and heat loss through windows.

4) Clean and change furnace filters regularly. Furnaces should be checked and cleaned by a qualified repairman once a year. Air filters should be cleaned and replaced when they become loaded with dust or lint.

5) Close window draperies at night. Regular draperies reduce heat loss slightly; insulated draperies cut down heat loss even more.

6) Seal as tightly as possible any openings which may permit cold air leakage from the attic. Leakage is likely to occur around attic stairway doors, pulldown stairways, electric light fixtures, ceiling fans, air ducts, and plumbing vents or pipes. Air leakage from the attic not only increases heat loss but also increases the possibility of moisture condensation in the attic. Condensation could wet insulation and building materials, eventually causing structural damage and reducing the effectiveness of the insulation.

7) If your basement is heated, close off upper wall construction that is open to the attic. However, be sure to provide exterior vents into the wall cavity. Crawlspace vents may be covered to prevent heat loss.

8) Repair leaking hot water faucets. Leaky faucets waste both heat and water.

9) Close fireplace dampers when they are not in use. This will keep heated air from escaping up the chimney.