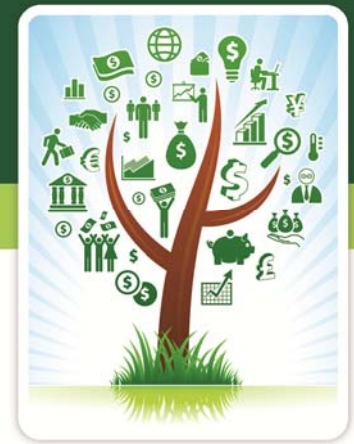


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Saving on Home Heating Costs

November 20, 2012

As old man winter prepares to bear down on the Midwest, finding ways to save on heating costs makes good sense and is an excellent way to start cutting costs in the New Year. Whether you heat your home with oil, natural gas or electricity, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), offers the following tips to help you save money and stay warm:

- Ask your utility company about a budget billing plan to protect against sudden or unexpected price increases.
- Conduct an energy audit to help detect waste and gauge efficiency of your current heating system. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) offers instructions at www.homeenergysaver.lbl.gov.
- Schedule an annual tune-up for your furnace, heat pump or boiler. Your utility company may offer this service.
- Install a programmable thermostat that will automatically lower the temperature at night and while you're at work .
- When you shop for a new furnace, water heater or other home appliance, consider purchasing a high-efficiency model. Although some energy-efficient appliances cost more than other models, their lower operating costs could save you money in the long run.
- Clean or replace filters on forced-air furnaces and heat pumps, and vacuum air vents, baseboard heaters and radiators regularly.
- Wrap your hot water heater in an insulating jacket. A water heater needs extra insulation if it's warm to the touch.
- Use caulking or weather-stripping to seal air leaks around windows and doors and holes around plumbing and heating pipes. Check existing caulking and weather-stripping for gaps or cracks.
- Close the doors to rooms you don't use regularly.

Don't Get Burned

The FTC warns that when energy prices go up, so does advertising for a host of energy-saving products and services—some legitimate, but others overpriced or just plain bogus. Be wary of devices, gadgets and energy-saving products that promise drastic reductions in home heating costs or extreme energy savings.

Be wary of uninvited door-to-door sales calls, and stop anyone making a high-pressure sales pitch for furnaces, windows, roofing, siding or other home-improvement products. To make sure a contractor is licensed and reputable, ask friends and neighbors for referrals, ask the contractor for customer references and check out potential contractors with the Better Business Bureau and other state and local consumer protection officials.



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