

# Eight easy tips to help winterize your home

In many households, the bulk of energy is consumed during the cold-weather months. That's because heat is often running all day long to keep the home comfortable, heavier clothes are worn, which take longer to wash and dry, less time is spent cooking outdoors and more time is geared around firing up the kitchen stove.

Making some changes — in a green way — can be beneficial, especially in terms of monetary savings. Here are a few steps to take.

**1. Douse drafts:** Drafts can drive up energy usage. Caulk around windows and doors, or consider replacing drafty windows all together if it's in the budget. There are many energy-efficient options available. Another way to stop drafts is with a "draft snake." It's simply any piece of fabric (even a rolled up towel) that's placed at the bottom of doors to prevent drafts. You can use scraps of fabric, sew them in a tube shape and fill with sand or kitty litter. Kids can customize theirs with eyes and tongues from craft store supplies.

**2. Replace furnace filters:** Clogged furnace filters compromise

the flow of air through the system and can cause the unit to work harder. That equates to more energy use. Replace filters at least once a month. An even greener option is electrostatic filters. They trap around 88 percent of debris, and are much better at controlling the bacteria, mold, viruses and pollen that cause illness and irritation. They will be more costly than standard filters, however.

**3. Turn down the water heater thermostat:** Many thermostats are set to heat the water to 60 C (140 F). That level of warmth is often not needed. Turning down the thermostat to 49 C (120 F) can save considerable energy ... and money.

**4. Watch the thermostat:** Statistics show that for every degree you lower the thermostat during heating season, you'll save between one and three per cent of your heating bill. Use a programmable thermostat to automatically keep the heat at the desired temperature, whether you're home or not.

**5. Cozy up to save:** Keep the thermostat a little lower and dress warmer. A sweater worn around the house can save you money. Also,



Winterizing your home will save energy and money.

don't forget to don slippers or warm socks. A lot of heat is lost through the feet and head.

**6. Beef up insulation:** Add more insulation to the home and insulate pipes for added energy savings.

**7. Switch ceiling fan direction:** Enabling ceiling fan blades to spin clockwise will draw warm air trapped near the ceiling down to the living area. This can improve comfort and save money on heating.

**8. Use an eco-friendly ice melter:** Ice melters typically destroy surrounding vegetation where they are applied and can be harmful to wildlife. Seek out a green product that will be safer for the environment.



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## Keep your home safe and secure

Change all the locks when you buy a new home. Add dead-bolt locks and window locks where necessary.

Consider getting a security system. Your property insurance rate may be lower if you have one.

Get fire extinguishers for each floor in the house.

When you are away from home, use lights and radios on automatic timers and arrange to have your mail and newspapers picked up or discontinued. This way, people won't be able to tell that you are not home.

Get to know your neighbours and keep an eye out for each other.

### Be prepared and stay safe

Have a fire evacuation plan and make sure everyone in your home knows how to get out of the home from each room in case of a fire. If you have a second floor, you need a special escape plan to get to the ground. Check to see that windows have not been painted shut. Although doors and windows should always be securely locked, you have to be able to open them in an emergency.

### A few tips:

Fire extinguishers must be easily accessible at all times. If you have a two storey home, there should be one on each floor. Remember to check your fire extinguishers at least once a year, and to replace them if they are 10 years old or older. To help you remember, make a habit of doing it when you set your clocks to Daylight Saving Time.

Make sure you have smoke alarms in your home. Check the batteries at least once a year. Carbon monoxide detectors are also important to have. They will let you know if there are high levels of carbon monoxide in your home and can save you from illness or death. To make sure that they are working properly, check them at least once a year. It is a good idea to make a habit of checking your fire extinguishers, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors at the same time.

Paper, paint, chemicals and other clutter can be a fire hazard. Make sure they are stored in a safe place. If you no longer need them, hazardous materials must be disposed of at a community toxic waste center. Never put them in the garbage.

Collect your important papers and store them in a safe place — for example, a fireproof box or a safety deposit box.

Keep a list of emergency phone numbers (including 911, poison prevention line, doctors, relatives, neighbours and friends) close to the phone and make sure your children are aware of it.

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