

# Energy Saving Tips for Winter

In New York State, heating is by far the biggest energy expense. It costs the average family between \$800 and \$2000 per year depending on heating fuel and other factors. There are actions you can take to cut these costs. Here are some tips to reduce your energy use and bills

## Have a Boiler or Furnace?

- Turn down your thermostat. Keeping your thermostat down just one degree saves about 2% on your heating bill. A five-degree reduction will generate 10% annual savings and could keep \$80 to \$200 in your pocket! Wear a sweater to help you stay warm.
- Consider installing a programmable thermostat and set it to 68 °F when you're home, and 55 °F when you're gone. It will remember to turn the heat down for you!
- Have a professional tune up and inspect your furnace once a year. This can save you up to an additional 10% on your heating costs. You may qualify for a NYSEG rebate to get this done.
- If you have forced air heat, you can clean the filter each month by vacuuming the filter to improve air flow and reduce energy costs. Replace the filter each year.
- If you have a hot water or steam heat system, like with radiators, check water levels. A heating professional can tell you how to add more water. Ask the pro for more tips to make your system work better.
- Clear and clean the area around your furnace. This will reduce the risk of fire and improves airflow.
- Make sure heat can get into the rooms you want heated. Keep furniture and drapes from blocking radiators, heating registers, and return vents.
- Seal cracks in your forced air duct work with Mastic or metal duct tape available at your local home improvement store.



## Other Winter Tips

- Use drapes. Where windows face the sun, keep drapes open on sunny days, but close all drapes at night. Keeping shades drawn and drapes closed will make the room more comfortable without any increase in energy use.
- Tighten up your windows. Even a small gap can drive up fuel bills. Got a loose window? Install weather stripping or caulk any gaps. It helps keep cold air out of the house.
- Install storm windows and storm doors and remember to put them down once winter begins. They improve the comfort of the room and pay for themselves by keeping cold air out. Caulk or weather-strip any gaps around the storm windows and doors.
- Close storm doors. Seal air leaks by caulking and weather-stripping doors. That keeps heat in and heating costs down.
- Install door sweeps if the gap between the door and floor is large. Use "draft dodgers" like a long pillow or towel under the door to reduce drafts.

## Have a Fireplace or Wood Stove?

- Buy "seasoned" wood or let it season yourself. That means wood that has been allowed to dry out under cover. One whole year of drying is best, but even six months can bring the moisture down below 20%, which is what you should aim for. Freshly cut wood has too much moisture to burn well.
- Use the dampers. Keep the damper closed when you aren't using the fireplace. Or plug the fireplace if it is no longer used for heat.
- Haven't used your fireplace in more than a year? Call a chimney sweep for an inspection and make all necessary repairs before using it again.

## But Most Importantly

- Get an energy assessment. These are free for most New Yorkers (a \$250 value paid for by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority). A professional energy contractor will come to your home and help identify improvements that make sense for your home. The assessment may also qualify you for incentives, rebates and low-interest financing that can be applied to these improvements.
- We are here to help. Find a nearby Community Energy Advisor on our website. We can help you learn about and access programs to help cut your heating costs, make your home more comfortable, and be more environmentally friendly.

[www.smartenergychoices.org](http://www.smartenergychoices.org)

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