

Cut Your Heating Costs **By Jeff Cooper**

Reducing your energy needs this winter can result in big savings. Here are several ways to cut your heating bill –

1. Use the sun to warm your home. Keep blinds and drapes open when the sun's shining, and then close them at dusk.
2. Add insulation to your attic. Heat rises, so a well-insulated attic holds warmth like a down jacket. Having a contractor blow in loose fill is the easiest option. Be sure to keep insulation away from recessed ceiling lights, in order to avoid fire hazards. Also make certain that air vents on the outer edge of your attic floor aren't covered by insulation. Additionally it helps to insulate pipes and ducts carrying warm water and air throughout the house. Access to these areas may be found in basements, attics, or crawl spaces.
3. Caulking around windows and doorframes can keep out a lot of cold air. Weather stripping also makes door and window seals tight. And remember to close your chimney flue when you aren't using it, so that warm air won't escape. Large gaps around outside faucets and dryer vents can be filled with foam that expands and hardens after it's sprayed from a can. At your hardware store you'll also find kits with clear sheets of adhesive plastic for insulating sliding glass doors.
4. Programmable thermostats let the home temperature fall when nobody's there. Electric space heaters also can warm up small areas, when you don't need to heat the entire house.
5. A new furnace may increase the efficiency of your heating unit from 50 percent to above 90 percent. Your winter energy costs will be cut drastically as a result.