

Be Green, Even When It's White!

“Your World” Submission for 1-28-2008

Washtenaw County is currently in the midst of a frigid winter. While experiencing sub-zero temperatures, most of us are thinking just one thing: Stay Warm!! In our frantic attempt to keep warm, it can be easy to forget our responsibilities to the environment. Fortunately, there are several small things around that house that can greatly contribute to having an environmentally healthy winter. The following facts and tips will not only assist in reducing pollution to help our environment, but will also help save money – all while keeping warm!

- It is projected that, in 2008, the **average US family will spend \$2,200** on home energy costs, with approximately half of that spent on heating/cooling.
- Homeowners can reduce their bill up to 20% by **using energy-efficient heating and cooling equipment**, sized and installed correctly, with properly sealed ducts. Such features require an initial investment, but are guaranteed to save money.
- **Be sure your ducts are sealed properly!** For those with a forced air furnace or heat pump, a duct system is what's responsible for warm air circulation throughout your home. If your ducts are leaky, it can reduce your the efficiency of your system by 20%. Having properly sealed ducts is guaranteed to save you money, while also helping to consistently heat every room.
- Ensure that you **clean or change the air filter** in your heating and cooling system monthly. Dirty air filters are known to increase energy costs and lead to early equipment failure.
- **Seal the holes!** Airflow from hidden gaps and cracks in your home is the equivalent of leaving a window open in the middle of the winter. The more heat that escapes, the more cold air enters, causing your system to work harder and use more energy. So, be sure to seal air leaks and add insulation where needed—pay special attention to your attic and basement, where the biggest gaps and cracks are often found. Windows also significantly contribute to heat loss, and sometimes require replacement. If replacing windows, be sure to use ones that are “Energy Star” qualified.
- Finally, the simplest, most convenient way to reduce the energy bill is by **using a fireplace, warm clothes and blankets** instead of cranking up the heat!

For an educational campaign on saving energy, Washtenaw County has created two short PSAs and a 12-min home-energy makeover video, all of which are extremely useful resources. These videos, along with other home energy-saving information, can be viewed at the following site: ewashtenaw.org/home-energy. We strongly encourage you to check out this site!

For more information about home energy conservation, please call 734-222-6874.

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