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Living



Saturday, October 6, 2007

Experts say you can get more bang for the BTU

THE NEW YORK TIMES

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With winter approaching, and heating costs showing no signs of dropping with the temperature, homeowners will be looking for ways to get the biggest bang for their energy dollar.

Lorene Bartos, an extension educator for the University of Nebraska Lincoln Extension, recited a list of standard energy-saving actions: caulk and weatherstrip windows and doors, insulate the attic, seal or remove window air-conditioners, clean or replace furnace filters.

But there are also other ways to save on energy costs bit by bit, she said.

For example, homeowners can use passive solar heat by allowing sunlight in through south-facing windows. At the same time, windows facing west and north should have window shades down or window treatments closed to keep heat inside, and all windows should be covered at night. Bartos said that heating ducts should be checked for leaks and any leaks sealed.

Ted Funk, an extension specialist in agricultural engineering at the University of Illinois in Urbana, said that even with glass doors,

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fireplaces may be no more than 40 percent efficient.

Owners might also want to conduct a Web-based audit of their homes that will provide some tips for energy saving. "Lawrence Berkeley Labs has a good energy-saving tool," he said. "You put in your ZIP code, and it will show you some priorities to work on." (The Web site: <http://hes.lbl.gov>.)

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