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Seniors

The SAVVY SENIOR Energy Saving Tips

Dear Savvy Senior,

Can you give me some tips on how to make a home more energy efficient? My 74-year-old mother lives on a limited income in an old house and her utility bills are extremely high. What all can we do to cut her costs without spending a fortune?

Cost Cutting Ken

Dear Ken:

High energy prices over the past few years have caused millions of Americans to evaluate their homes' energy efficiency. By making just a few simple changes, you can significantly reduce your mother's energy bills. Here's what you should know.

Energy Audit

A good first step in making an older home more energy-efficient is to do or get an energy audit that evaluates how much energy the home uses, pinpoints problem areas where the house is losing or wasting energy and details what you can do to correct it. Energy audits cost up to \$400 but some energy companies provide free audits for low-income households. To locate an energy auditor, call your local utility company or state energy department (see www.naseo.org for a list). Here are some other resources that can help:

+ **Residential Energy Services Network:** A nonprofit organization that provides an online directory of certified home energy auditors at www.natresnet.org.

+ **Department of Energy:** Offers great information and resources, including a do-it-yourself home energy audit checklist that can help you spot problems. Visit www.eere.energy.gov/consumer.

+ **Home Energy Saver:** A governmentsponsored site (<http://hes.lbl.gov>) that offers a free online energy auditing tool.

Energy Saving Tips

November 8, 2006

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Uncle Peter's Offers Fine Continental Cuisine

Read the full story on page 18 of this week's issue. For more information, visit www.unclepeters.com

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Here are some tips that can help make your mom's home more energy-efficient and cost-effective.

+ **Weatherize:** Plug leaks around windows, doors, ducts, pipes and electrical outlets with caulking and weather-stripping and close fireplace dampers when not in use. Insulating window films are also an inexpensive way to help seal drafty old windows.

+ **Insulate:** Add insulation to attic, walls and basement. Also make sure air ducts are insulated and sealed. See www.simplyinsulate.com.

+ **Tuneup:** Get a professional to service your mom's heating and cooling systems every year and change the filters. Costs range between \$50 and \$100.

+ **Smart thermostat:** Invest in a programmable thermostat (\$50 to \$125), which can be set to lower temperatures at night or when she's away.

+ **Vent check:** Be sure furniture and drapes don't block air flow from floor vents.

+ **Water heater:** Reduce the hot water heater to warm or 120 degrees Fahrenheit and make sure it has an insulating blanket.

+ **Light for less:** Replace light bulbs with new compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs), which use 75 percent less energy. And don't forget to turn off everything (lights, television, computer, etc.) when not in use.

+ **Free heat:** In the winter, keep blinds or drapes open on sun-exposed windows during the day and closed at night to conserve heat. Also, close off all unoccupied areas of the house.

+ **Home upgrades:** If your mom's house has leaky, single-pane windows, old appliances, an outdated furnace and more, consider upgrading with efficient, money saving products that have the Energy Star label-the government-backed symbol for energy efficiency. See www.energystar.gov for a comprehensive list of home improvement products and where to get them, or call 888-782-7937.

Savvy Tips: For more energy saving tips, get the Department of Energy's free booklet "Energy Savers: Tips on Saving Energy & Money at Home" by calling 877-337-3463. Also, the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy offers good information on energy efficiency tax incentives, rebates and more at www.aceee.org.

Energy Assistance

If your mom lives on a tight budget, there are several



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resources that may be able to help her with her utility bills, including:

+ **Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program**, a federally funded program that helps eligible low income homeowners and renters meet their home heating and/or cooling needs. Visit www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/liheap or call 866-674-6327.

+ **Weatherization Assistance Program** helps lower-income people make their homes more energy-efficient. Visit www.eere.energy.gov/weatherization or call 800-363-3732.

+ **National Fuel Funds Network** offers assistance from a group of 300 nonprofit agencies, utilities and government agencies. See www.nationalfuelfunds.org.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit www.savvysenior.org. Jim Miller is a contributor to the "NBC Today Show" and author of *The Savvy Senior* books.