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- Columnists
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Living

Obituaries

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Past articles

Traffic

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Yellow Pages

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Newsletters

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[Back to Home](#) > [News](#) >

Friday, Dec 01, 2006

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Posted on Thu, Sep. 21, 2006

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Prepare now to save money on heating bills

As temperatures drop and energy prices continue to rise, the prospect of heating your home this winter can be downright scary. Heating and cooling costs consume more than 40 percent of a typical home's annual energy budget, the U.S. Department of Energy says.

Here's how you can save on energy bills this winter:

Surf the Web. The Home Energy Saver (hes.lbl.gov) helps consumers identify ways to save energy, according to your location and home specifications.

Make sure your doors and windows keep cold air out. Installing new replacement windows or pre-hung entry/storm doors can do the trick. Not sure whether your windows need replacement? Look for broken or cracked pieces of glass in the window frame or sill, and make sure doors fit snugly into doorjams.

You don't have to spend a lot to replace your current windows and doors. Try investing in weather-stripping kits and sealing energy leaks. A little caulk to cover cracks and small holes can save you a bundle.

Your utility company might offer incentives to make improvements that save energy. Some companies offer low-interest loans or discounts on door and window replacements.

Get a programmable thermostat and set it at a low temperature for most of the day when no one is home. You can have it heat your home half an hour before you return.

Some energy companies offer energy-savings programs in which they'll shut down electric appliances briefly during peak hours.

Consider landscaping that helps protect your home. Trees planted in the right place can block winter winds, for instance.

-- MarketWatch.com



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