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Savvy Senior: Energy Saving Tips

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Savvy Senior: Energy Saving Tips

By: Jim Miller

Posted by editor Mon Nov 20, 2006 12:23:27 PST
Viewed 101 times
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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 old house and her utility bills are extremely high. What all can we do to cut her cost 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-efficient making just a few simple changes, you can significantly reduce your mother's energy bills. Here's what you should kn

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 energy the home uses, pinpoints problem areas where the house is losing or wasting energy and what you can do to c Energy audits cost up to \$400 but some energy companies provide free audits for low-income households. To locate a auditor, call your local utility companies or state energy department (see www.naseo.org for a list). Here are some resources that can help.

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

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

- Home Energy Saver: A government-sponsored site (<http://hes.lbl.gov>) that offers a free online energy auditing to

Energy Saving Tips

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-strip close fireplace damper when not in use. Insulating window films are also an inexpensive way to help seal drafty old w

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

- Tune-up: Get a professional to service her heating and cooling systems every year and change the filters. Costs ran between \$50 and \$100.

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

- Vent check: Be sure furniture and drapes don't block the air flow from the floor vent.

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- **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 your light bulbs with new compact fluorescent (CFLs), which use 75 percent less energy. And don't forget to turn off everything (lights, television, computer, etc.) 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, 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, 888-782-7937.

Savvy Tips: For more energy savings tips get the Department of Energy's free booklet "Energy Savers: Tips on Saving 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 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 866-674-6321.
- **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.nationalfuelnetwork.org. Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit www.savvysenior.org. Jim Mill is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" books.

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