



Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

Your Residential Utility Consumer Advocate

CONSUMERS' FACT SHEET

Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

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Customer Guide to: IMPROVING HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY

It's never too late to take steps to weatherize a house and keep your warm or cool air—and money—from flying out the window. The Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel, the residential utility consumer advocate, offers the following tips to keep your home protected from the blustery cold of winter and sweltering heat of summer. Using these tips will not only keep heating and cooling inside where it is needed, it also could save money as well.

Windows & Doors

When heat loss or cooling loss becomes an issue, windows and doors are typically the first areas that need attention. Quick and effective ways to fix air leaks and drafts range from weather stripping and caulking to sealing windows with an insulator kit.

There are many options to prevent drafts from one of your home's largest openings. Weather stripping for doors can be as easy as lining the door with self-adhesive foam weather stripping. In older houses, doors may be susceptible to warping and could need the door threshold or the door sweep replaced.

For windows, using a flexible silicone caulk to seal gaps around window molding and siding of the house is a start to making them less prone to leaks. Be sure you use a product designed especially for windows and doors, as expansion and contraction from temperatures could make them difficult to open and close if the product is not flexible. Window insulator kits also help in keeping drafts out and warm air inside.

Furnace & water heater

The winter months cause a furnace and hot water heater to work extra hard to keep temperatures regulated. But there are ways for you to help to make sure the heat stays where you want it – in the house.

Be sure to follow the furnace manufacturer's instructions on filter maintenance. Some filters should be changed monthly to ensure the furnace is running as efficiently as possible. Dirty filters can cause a furnace to run at higher temperatures, wasting natural gas and money.

The first thing to check on your hot water heater is the temperature setting. It should be set to 120 degrees Fahrenheit for most common uses. Higher temperatures cause more heat loss from the tank and lower temperatures could cause bacteria to build up, causing possible illness. For a hot water heater older than 10 years, wrapping the water heater with an insulation blanket will also help retain heat and maintain good temperatures. Use of foam rubber insulation on water pipes will reduce heat loss and reduce the chance of water freezing.

Thermostats

An important factor to make sure customers are getting the most out of their newly weatherized home is to invest in a digital programmable thermostat. Presetting a heating and cooling schedule will better manage temperatures while away from and at home. Programmable thermostats store four or more settings per day, enabling residents to have the temperature automatically drop based on a schedule of when they will be away from the house or asleep.

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The state agency also educates consumers about electric, natural gas, telephone and water issues.

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For houses with fireplaces, making sure the damper is closed when a fire is not being burned will significantly reduce heat loss and drafts.

Comprehensive weatherization measures

There are more comprehensive measures that can be taken to ensure the house keeps the temperatures regulated. Actions like adding or replacing wall and attic insulation, sealing the air ducts and replacing the furnace and water heater with more efficient models will utilize electricity or natural gas more effectively. This is where homeowners typically see the greatest energy savings.

Weatherize while you are away

For Ohioans who spend their winters in warmer weather, taking these steps along with a couple of extra measures will help avoid any surprise cleanups upon returning home.

Turn down the thermostat to 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Avoid turning your heating system completely off. It will help prevent water pipes from freezing and breaking. Another measure to keep pipes from becoming damaged while away is to shut off the water and drain the pipes.

For more information

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Energy Savings Potential From Energy Efficiency and Conservation

Energy Efficiency/ Conservation Measure	Measure Detail	End-Use Savings % ^{1,3}
Setback Thermostat ²	One setback period (5 degrees, 8 hrs)	Up to 10%
Setback Thermostat ²	Two setback periods (5 degrees, 16 hrs)	Up to 20%
High Efficiency Furnace Replacement	Old pilot light 65% efficiency to 95% efficiency	32%
High Efficiency Furnace Replacement	80% efficiency to 95% efficiency	16%
High Efficiency Boiler Replacement	Old pilot light 65% efficiency to 88% efficiency	25%
High Efficiency Boiler Replacement	80% efficiency to 88% efficiency	8%
High Efficiency Heat pump Replacement	6.8 efficiency to 9.0 efficiency	24%
Home Insulation & Weatherization	Upgrade insulation and seal air leaks	Up to 30%
Window Replacement	Replace older windows with double pane low e glass	10-20%
Duct Sealing & Duct Insulation	Mastic over joints, then insulate ducts in unheated space	Up to 20%
Weather Stripping	Caulking, air sealing, install wall gaskets	Up to 10%
Lower Water Heater Temperature	From 160-180 degrees to 120-140 degrees	5-10%
Energy Efficient Shower Heads	Hot water savings	10-16%
Water Heater Blankets	For units over 10 years old	Up to 10%

¹Savings percentages are not additive because of interaction effects from implementing multiple measures.

²For heat pump customers, be sure to use an appropriate programmable thermostat.

³Savings for conservation measures are dependent on state of home efficiency prior to improvement.