



TIPS FOR HOMEOWNERS

Reduce Your Home Heating Costs And Protect Your Budget

(NAPSA)—Don't let cold weather and higher energy bills get you hot under the collar. Energy experts offer these steps to help control your heating costs and protect your budget from unexpected increases in natural gas and electricity rates:

Shop around for your energy provider. Many states allow you to buy natural gas and electricity from an independent marketer. Check to see which companies offer the most desirable plans.

Consult an expert. Seek out an energy marketer. These professionals work with consumers to determine their best energy choices based on usage, climate, home size and other factors.

Check to see if you can lock in your energy rates. Enrolling in this type of plan will help protect you from spikes in energy rates. Much like a fixed-rate mortgage, a fixed-rate energy plan helps you stabilize your budget and prepare for the heating season.

Conserve energy by managing your thermostat. Setting the thermostat to 55 degrees, or lower, at night or when leaving home can lead to savings of as much as 20 percent on your heating costs. You should also wear warm clothing inside and set your thermostat to 68 degrees or lower during the day. You can save up to 5 percent on heating costs for every degree you lower your heat during the winter.

Don't cook your clothes. Use cold or warm water when washing clothes—it's the detergent, not water temperature, which determines how clean your clothes are going to be. Avoid overdrying clothes when using the dryer.

Use energy efficient appliances. When installing a new



Heating costs rise in winter. Conserve energy by managing your thermostat and check to see if you can lock in your energy rates to protect your budget.

water heater or furnace, research which options are the most energy efficient. You'll save on energy costs and you might be pleasantly surprised to learn that you qualify for a rebate from your energy provider if you choose energy efficient models.

Inspect and maintain your furnace. Ensure your furnace is operating at peak performance by having an annual inspection and routine system maintenance performed.

Clean filters and vents. Dirty or clogged furnace and air filters can demand more energy and slow the heating of your home.

Make sure your house is properly insulated. Poorly insulated doors, windows and vents cost you money. You can reduce the amount of energy needed to heat and cool your home by having a professional check that your home has the proper insulation.

For more information on how to control energy costs, visit www.mxenergy.com.