



Hints For The Home

Slash Your Energy Bill Fast

(NAPSA)—You're probably spending more than \$2,000 a year on utility bills. Heating and cooling your home accounts for more than half of that.

Older homes can be money pits. In fact, houses built before 1950 use about 60 percent more energy per square foot than those built since 2000.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, sealing air leaks—especially around doors and windows—and improving your home's insulation are the fastest and most cost-effective ways to save energy and money.

Of course, insulating won't stop leaks. So weatherstripping and caulking should be your first plan of attack. In fact, the government says those two simple air-sealing techniques will pay for themselves within a year.

These tips will help you save money:

• **Check for leaks:** On a cold day, run your hand around doorframes and windows. You'll need weatherstripping if you feel drafts around joints that are inside your door and window frames. You'll need caulking if you see cracks or feel drafts around the outside joints of your door and window frames.

• **Weatherstrip your doors:** A new low-cost DIY product called Cinch, by M-D Building Products (cinchdoorseal.com), allows you to seal your doors in less than 15 minutes using a special peel-and-stick 3M adhesive. All you do is measure, cut, peel and stick it into place around your doorframes and on the bottom of your doors.



Weatherstripping and caulking will pay for themselves in energy savings within a year.

• **Weatherstrip your windows:** Rolled sponge rubber weatherstripping applied to the inner sash, as well as the top and bottom of windows, will create a strong money-saving seal that will last for years.

• **Check your caulking:** You'll need to redo cracked caulking around windows and doorframes to keep outside air, rain and insects from coming in. Look for a long-lasting siliconized acrylic caulk that can be painted, resists mold and mildew and forms a weather-tight seal.

• **Insulate your attic:** If you have less than 11 inches of fiberglass or eight inches of blown cellulose (recycled paper) in your attic, you could probably benefit by adding more. This is especially important if you live in colder climates.

Other easy, low-cost ways to save money include installing a programmable thermostat, turning off lights, lowering your water heater's thermostat to 120 degrees and washing full loads of dishes and clothes.