

Weather Got You Steaming? Here's How To Cut Your Home Energy Bills

(NAPSA)—Think of the electric bills those poor souls living in much of the East Coast must have run up recently. Even if you didn't sweat through those record-breaking, 100-plus-degree days yourself, it should've been a reminder of the one thing every homeowner needs to know: If you really want to cut down on your own costs—and who doesn't in this economy?—look skyward.

To your roof, that is.

During the home-buying frenzy, one of the more popular statistics thrown around was how a roof represents about 40 percent or more of a home's "curb appeal" to potential buyers. That's still true. Less discussed, though, was how the components of the entire roofing system—particularly the shingles and proper attic ventilation—can actually save you big bucks year-round on both your cooling and heating bills.

"In the summer, I've seen some attics get so hot the shingles actually fry," says JoAnne Liebler, former co-host of PBS's "HomeTime."

How hot might that be? Without the right intake and exhaust vents in your roof, shingles can reach temperatures hotter than 160 degrees.

"Moisture can seriously reduce the effectiveness of your insulation," says Liebler. "That means higher energy bills—and who needs that?"

Okay, so now that you know why yours may be among the nine out of 10 homes in North America that have been needlessly feeding the utility companies' profits, here's what you need to do to fix it:

Check the insulation levels in your attic. Find out the cur-



The latest reflective shingles mean homeowners can give their air conditioners a rest.

rent building codes in your area and make sure that your attic contains at least the minimum recommended levels. Updating would immediately help maintain comfortable temperatures.

Embrace the new world of shingles. Liebler is high on the Timberline Cool Series line of shingles from GAF Materials Corporation (www.gaf.com), North America's largest roofing manufacturer, which can shave another 7 to 15 percent, on average, off your air-conditioning costs thanks to its new reflective technology. Plus, since both the white and color shingles are Energy Star qualified—traditionally, only white got that nod—you could be eligible for a tax credit to boot.

- **Think ridge vents.** They may not sound sexy, but they can help remove excess heat and moisture when installed on a roof's peak. The same applies to solar-powered, roof-mounted attic fans, which have a higher "sexy" factor. And remember that intake venting is required for your ridge vents to work properly.

In the meantime, you just have to get by the old-fashioned way: Close your shutters and blinds when the sun streams in.