

Steps to Energy Saving Success

Before you pull the trigger on a major investment to make your home more comfortable or more energy efficient, make sure you have attended to the smaller things that can undermine your investment. I've heard from too many homeowners that have made 1 big energy improvement investment hoping to fix the cause of their high energy bills or uncomfortable rooms. With an unseasonably cold winter and so much advertising and energy saving marketing going on, it's easy to get sucked into the hype and plunk down big money in an effort to reduce your energy bills or warm up your home. But there is NO silver bullet that will cure chilly rooms and/or high energy bills. There are almost always multiple reasons why a home is underperforming. There is, however, a logical progression of activities that you can follow to incrementally improve the performance of your home and set the stage for significantly better payback from more expensive energy upgrades. Most of these steps are self-explanatory but if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call. Before you spend gobs of money trying to solve your high energy bills or uncomfortable rooms, make sure you've solved the simple yet critical problems that plague a home's performance and delay the payback on large energy saving investments.

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Job 1 - Air sealing: Ensure all voids, cracks and openings are covered, weatherstripped or otherwise sealed to ensure you keep conditioned air inside in your living space.

Job 2 - Insulate, insulate, insulate: Make sure attics, vented crawl spaces, kneewalls and other spaces where unconditioned air enters your home are well insulated. Don't forget to install a hot water tank blanket and insulation for the hot water pipes.

Job 3 - Seal leaks in HVAC and duct system: Leaks in your HVAC/duct system, especially when the HVAC unit and/or ducts are in unconditioned spaces (like attics) reduce the performance of this equipment.

Job 4 - Monitor and reduce your energy use: This is a behavioral change that can save you lots depending on how vigilant you are.

Job 5 - Switch out lighting: Replace incandescent lightbulbs with CFLs or LEDs

Job 6 - Review water heating efficiency: With federal and state tax credits available, solar thermal water heating systems are becoming cost effective

Job 7 - Upgrade to higher efficiency HVAC: I'm an advocate of running HVAC systems until they are unfixable but you may want to talk to your HVAC repairman about the cost/benefit of replacing yours.

Job 8 - Replace single pane windows: Replacing single panes with double or triple pane windows will make your home more comfortable but may have a long payback period. A cheaper option is to install storm windows as long as the windows operate properly and the window opening is not deteriorating.

Job 9 - Install solar power: Once the jobs above are complete, it's time to consider creating your own electricity. With all the improvements in place, you won't need as many solar panels and your investment will payoff quicker!

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