

Dear Friend,

Each month, BOWA Home Advisor provides you with important tips on how to improve and protect your home's value. We hope the following is helpful.



Renovation - Potomac, MD

Are your energy costs on the rise?

If you've been feeling the effects of rising energy costs, the following energy-saving tips might be just what you need to get through the rest of the winter.

The best part is, each tip is low or no cost and most can be completed by you in a few hours or less. The result: a more efficient home, a cozier family and a healthier environment.

Heating/Air Conditioning: Did you know that nearly half of your energy costs go to heating your home?

- By regularly cleaning or replacing your unit's air filters you can help to improve airflow and increase the efficiency of your heater and air conditioner.
- Keeping your furnace clean, lubricated and properly adjusted may help you to save up to 5% of your total heating costs.
- As family activities tend to occur in 20% of the home, consider closing vents in the unoccupied areas to save energy and money.

Programmable Thermostats: Did you know that lowering your thermostat by just one degree can reduce your heating energy costs by about 4%?

- Keeping your home at a constant temperature is a real energy waster. The hours when you're sleeping or away from the home may represent energy-saving opportunities.
- A programmable thermostat automatically controls the amount of heating or cooling energy you use during different times of the day throughout the year.
- A programmable thermostat costs between \$100 and \$200, but can save Greater Washington households \$80 to \$140 a year on home heating bills.

Insulation: Did you know that a properly insulated ceiling

and attic can reduce heating and cooling costs by up to 25%?

- Adding new insulation can bring dramatic savings, especially in homes built before 1970.
- Fiberglass insulation is available in rolls that can be cut to size and laid in position.
- Insulation can also be blown into your ceiling by a contractor with special equipment.
- It's also a good idea to add insulation to your floors and walls, but this can be difficult and it is best to consult a professional.

Caulking & Weatherstripping: Did you know that the tiny gaps and cracks in an older home are roughly equivalent to a one-foot square hole punched in your wall?

- Gaps around windows, doors, intersecting materials or where wires enter the home, are all opportunities for air to enter or escape your conditioned space.
- Plugging these leaks with caulk or other materials is the first action homeowners should take to combat high heating fuel costs.
- While it's easy to install, weatherstripping comes in many sizes and shapes, so check with your local hardware store to find the right material for your needs.
- Caulk around outdoor faucets, wire and pipe holes and where different siding materials meet.

Hot Water Heater: Did you know that over 10% of your energy bill goes to heating water for your dishwasher, shower and faucets?

- Consider turning down your hot water heater. Though you need to keep your water heater set to at least 120 degrees to prevent bacteria from building up, many hot water heaters are set too high.
- Sediment buildup can insulate the water from the heating element. A few times each year, open the drain valve or faucet at the base of the water tank and drain a gallon or two of water into a container until it runs clean.
- To determine if your water heater needs additional insulation, place your hand on the water heater above the middle of the tank. If it feels hot or warm, you're wasting energy.
- As the standard hot water heater is on all the time, adding extra insulation to the unit will probably pay for itself in lower energy costs within a year.
- Be sure to refer to your water heater owner's manual before adding any type of after-market insulation.

Indoor and Outdoor Lighting Did you know that if every household in the U.S. replaced one light bulb with a compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL), it would prevent enough pollution to equal the removal of one million cars from the road?

- Compact fluorescent light bulbs are more expensive to buy than ordinary incandescent bulbs, but they last up to 10 times longer and use 75% less electricity.
- By replacing the four most used bulbs in your home with compact fluorescent bulbs, you can save about \$190 over the lifetime of the bulbs.
- Outdoor lights that are left on all night waste energy and disturb wildlife.
- You can safely and efficiently light the outside of your home by installing light fixtures that are activated by a motion sensor or timer. These devices will keep areas well lit when you need them to be while reducing your energy bill.

*** Select facts were excerpted from the Sierra Club, Alliance to Save Energy and U.S. Department of Energy.*

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If you would like more information on any of these topics or if there are other ways we can be of service, please contact [BOWA Builders](#).

Regards.



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