

Avoiding the Autumn Chill

By Wally Warrantech



As temperatures drop, home heating bills rise. Just how high yours will get this winter depends in part on the type of heating system you use. Mother Nature aside, your costs will obviously depend on the size of your house and the area of the country you call home - neither of which you would change just to lower your heating bill.

Fortunately, Wally Warrantech has a few simple steps to slice hundreds off your annual energy tab. Here are four ways to cut costs with little or no inconvenience.

1. Schedule a Check-UP: Whatever type of heating system you have, it needs an annual check-up by a professional. This will keep your system from losing efficiency over time, if your heat is delivered through a duct system, you need to continue to clean or change the filters regularly. A dirty filter makes your system work harder, driving up the costs. If the heater doctor says it's time for a new furnace, make sure to purchase one that comes with the Energy Star label. While it may cost more up front, Energy Star furnaces can be 15% more efficient than Standard models.

2. Install a Programmable Thermostat: Everyone wants the house to be toasty when they wake up or come home. But no one wants to pay to run the furnace day and night. Programmable thermostats let you heat your home at various temperatures throughout the day, so the house can be cooler when no one is home or when everyone is asleep and warm and comfortable when you can enjoy it. A programmable thermostat shouldn't set you back more than \$150, and you can slash your heating bills by 10% annually just by turning your thermostat back several degrees for 8 hours a day.

3. Plug Up Small Leaks: Chances are, your house is slowly losing heat to tiny leaks. And a lot of little leaks can add up to one big fat bill. Doors and windows are the most obvious culprits, but you should also check electrical outlets, ceiling fixtures, ducts and your attic door. Some leaks you can obviously feel. For smaller ones, light an incense stick and hold it up near a place where there may be a leak. If the smoke goes horizontal, you've found one. Plugging up leaks with caulking or weather stripping is easy and inexpensive, and you'll start saving immediately.

4. Add Insulation: Many homes, especially older ones, lose lots of heat because of poor insulation. And because heat rises, the main problem area is your attic. Other areas that could need more insulation are your basement, crawl space, floors and walls. Just how much insulation is recommended for each part of your home depends on your climate and your home's design. Insulation is measured in something called an "r-value." The higher the r-value, the greater the insulation.

With these four simple ways to cut costs, Wally Warrantech says you'll save a "fortune" in energy bills.

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Warrantech Home Service Company
2200 Highway 121, Ste. 100, Bedford, TX 76021
1-800-723-1496
www.warrantechassurance.com