

ENERGY MATTERS

Making Your Home (And Wallet) More Comfortable

(NAPSA)—Most Americans are just like you—they use natural gas heat to warm their homes and families. Using energy wisely and taking the time to just check little things will make a big difference in how much natural gas you use and how much you spend on your natural gas bill.

Here are a few tips to help you plan how to conserve energy and save money.

Keep The Cold Out

Consumers can take easy, inexpensive steps to reduce household energy consumption and minimize energy loss. Reducing air leaks could cut as much as 10 percent from an average household's monthly energy bill.

For example, consumers can:

- Seal leaks around doors, windows and other openings such as pipes or ducts with caulk or weather stripping.

The most common places where air escapes in homes are:

- floors, walls, ceilings
- ducts
- fireplace
- plumbing penetrations
- doors
- windows
- fans and vents
- electric outlets

Use Energy Wisely

- Set thermostats between 65 and 70 degrees during the winter, and at 58 degrees when away from the house for more than a few hours.

- While sleeping, add an extra blanket for warmth. Bear in mind that warmer temperatures are recommended for homes with ill or elderly persons or infants.

- Turn down thermostats automatically without sacrificing



By maximizing your home's energy efficiency, you can minimize your utility bill.

comfort by installing an automatic setback or programmable thermostat.

SAVINGS: Cut annual heating bills by as much as 10 percent per year by turning your thermostat back 10 percent to 15 percent for eight hours per day.

- Change or clean furnace filters once a month during the heating season. Furnaces consume less energy if they “breathe” more easily. Use receipt of your natural gas bill as a reminder.

For the long term, you can check to see if your attic and basement have the recommended levels of insulation. Also, check the heating system and replace old and outdated appliances with high-efficiency natural gas models. In addition, install storm or thermal windows and doors or double-paned glass. A less expensive alternative is plastic sheeting, which can be temporarily fastened over doors and windows to prevent drafts and retain heat.

For more information, visit the American Gas Association Web site at www.aga.org.