

# HINTS FOR HOMEOWNERS

## An Rx For Comfort And Cost Savings All Winter Long

(NAPSA)—With the U.S. Department of Energy predicting that the price for heating oil and natural gas will continue to remain high this winter due to lower inventories and increased demand expected in much of the country, it is especially important for homeowners to take action now to ensure that their houses are energy efficient.

To help homeowners combat high utility bills during the cooler months, James and Morris Carey, authors of “Home Maintenance for Dummies,” suggest the following practical tips for winterizing your home, minimizing energy loss and maximizing your comfort this winter.

### Examining the Exterior

Begin by examining the home’s exterior walls for cracks or holes, paying extra attention to gaps around external doors and windows where warm indoor air can escape or cold air can seep inside. Because 10 to 15 percent of heat loss occurs from cracks of this nature, the Carey brothers suggest sealing air leaks with caulk or weather stripping.

While outside, homeowners should also inspect the roof to ensure that all shingles are intact and flashings around chimneys, skylights, antennas and vents are well sealed.

“With high winds, snow and ice, the winter months can be particularly strenuous on the roof of a house,” said James Carey. “Be sure to replace broken, curled or missing shingles, and use roof caulking to patch any holes to pre-



**An Idea To Warm Up To: A new, efficient furnace can save homeowners hundreds of dollars each year compared to an older, less efficient furnace.**

vent heat loss before cold weather begins.”

Finally, homeowners should consider planting a few trees and shrubs of various heights to serve as windbreaks that will protect the house from cold, northerly winds. In fact, the Department of Energy estimates that home landscaping designed with “wind control” in mind can reduce winter heating bills by 25 percent.

### Inspecting the Interior

Continue your winter preparations by heading indoors and scheduling an appointment with a qualified heating professional to inspect the home’s heating system. According to the Carey brothers, an annual, preseason maintenance checkup for a furnace or boiler will help ensure that the system is operating efficiently.

This will also give you extra time to make any necessary repairs, if needed, or consider replacing the system, ultimately reducing the potential for a breakdown in the middle of winter.

“If your furnace is more than 15 years old, you should consider replacing it with a newer, more energy-efficient model,” said Morris Carey. “New, high-efficiency furnaces, such as those manufactured by Lennox, can help cut monthly heating costs by as much as 45 percent.”

In fact, the Dave Lennox Signature Collection G61V variable-speed gas furnace is 95 percent efficient, which means 95 percent of the energy it uses goes directly to heating the home. That can save homeowners hundreds of dollars each year compared to older, less efficient furnaces.

In addition to the home heating system, homeowners need to have fireplaces and chimneys inspected and cleaned annually. It’s also important to close the fireplace damper when not in use to prevent warm indoor air from escaping through the chimney.

Finally, take a look inside the attic to determine if additional insulation is needed. The amount of insulation needed will vary based on the region of the country and the home’s design, but generally, if there is less than five inches, it’s a good idea to add more.

To learn more about home energy efficiency and how to save money on utility bills, visit [www.ItPaysToLiveSmart.com](http://www.ItPaysToLiveSmart.com).