



Home Improvements

Keep Your Home Warm Without Breaking The Bank

(NAPSA)—With fuel costs so high, many Americans are facing the tough choice of turning down their thermostats and enduring a little chill rather than paying more to keep their homes toasty. However, don't unfurl the stadium blankets just yet. You may be able to keep your home cozy without breaking the bank by performing a few basic upgrades around the house.

"Homeowners can save a lot of money this winter just by taking steps to keep the warm air in and the cold air out," says home maintenance expert Keith Hahn of a leading home improvement contracting company. "Drafty windows and doors, for example, can increase a homeowner's heating costs by as much as 20 percent."

Hahn advises homeowners to check each of their windows and doors at least once a year to find energy-sapping drafts. Once located, drafts can be minimized with some basic do-it-yourself skills.

The simplest and most common solution, says Hahn, is using caulking cord to seal windows from the outside. Caulking cord is available at most home improvement stores. Just unroll the cord and use your fingers to press the cord into the creases between the sash and the window casing.

Exterior plastic sheeting is another option for sealing windows. While this option is not as aesthetically pleasing, plastic sheeting is very effective at insulating windows and DIY kits are widely available. "If you're uncomfortable on ladders, you should consider hiring a pro to install sheeting," cautions Hahn.



Around doors, check the weather stripping on the inside of the door frame to ensure that it is still providing a tight seal. If you see gaps or if the weather stripping is stiff, it's time for replacement, but this job is a little more difficult. Hiring a professional might be a wise option, he says, "especially considering the money you'll save by keeping your house sealed tightly."

Don't forget the spaces around exterior electrical outlets and faucets. Both caulking cord and canned foam insulation work well for sealing these spaces. Installing roll-in insulation between the basement and the first floor is also an easy way to keep the chill at bay.

Finally, Hahn advises homeowners to have their home heating systems serviced regularly. "If you're not having your furnace cleaned and your filters changed annually, you're still losing money no matter what else you do to keep your home warm this winter," he says.

Keith Hahn is the chief operating officer of Handyman Connection, a nationwide network of home improvement and repair contractors. For more information, call 1-800-466-5530 or visit Handyman Connection online at www.handymanconnection.com.