

Kill The Chill

Simple Tips for Keeping Your Home Toasty and Energy-Efficient This Winter

(NAPSA)—Homeowners can avoid one of the great pains of home ownership: drafts. Drafts are annoying because they creep up on people when they are most vulnerable—glancing out the window first thing in the morning, toweling off after a warm shower or taking off snow-covered shoes next to the front door.

According to Keith Hahn of Handyman Connection, one of the nation's largest home-improvement companies, those drafts also cost homeowners money. "Drafty windows and doors can increase a homeowner's heating costs by as much as 20 percent," says Hahn.

Older homes are especially vulnerable, but even new homes can develop drafts as they settle. Hahn advises homeowners to check each of their windows and doors at least once a year to locate energy-sapping drafts. Once located, drafts can be minimized or eliminated altogether 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 just about any home improvement store. Just unroll the cord and use your fingers to press the cord into the creases between the sash and the window casing. "Make sure you also seal the space between your top and bottom sash," Hahn adds.

Exterior sheeting is another option for sealing windows. While this option may not be as aesthetically pleasing, plastic sheeting is very effective at insulating windows. Pre-fabricated sheeting kits are widely available. Simply follow the manufacturers directions for installing the sheeting. "If you're uncomfortable on ladders or with your own DIY skills, 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 intact and supple enough to provide a tight seal. If you can see gaps, or if the weather stripping is no longer resilient, it's time for replacement. Materials are readily available, but this installation is a little more difficult. Hiring a professional to install new weather stripping around doors might be a wise option, says Hahn, "especially considering the money you'll save by keeping your house sealed tightly."

Other common but often forgotten sources of drafts are the spaces around exterior electrical outlets and faucets. Both caulking cord and canned foam insulation work well for sealing these spaces.

All of these solutions are effective but temporary, Hahn points out. "Recent technological advances may make it worth your while to consider replacing windows and doors altogether," 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.*