

Do-It-Yourself Home Energy Audits

One of the first steps to making your home more efficient involves understanding how it uses energy. Just as a doctor has to do a thorough examination of a patient before writing a prescription, your home will need a good inspection before most inefficiencies can be identified and corrected.

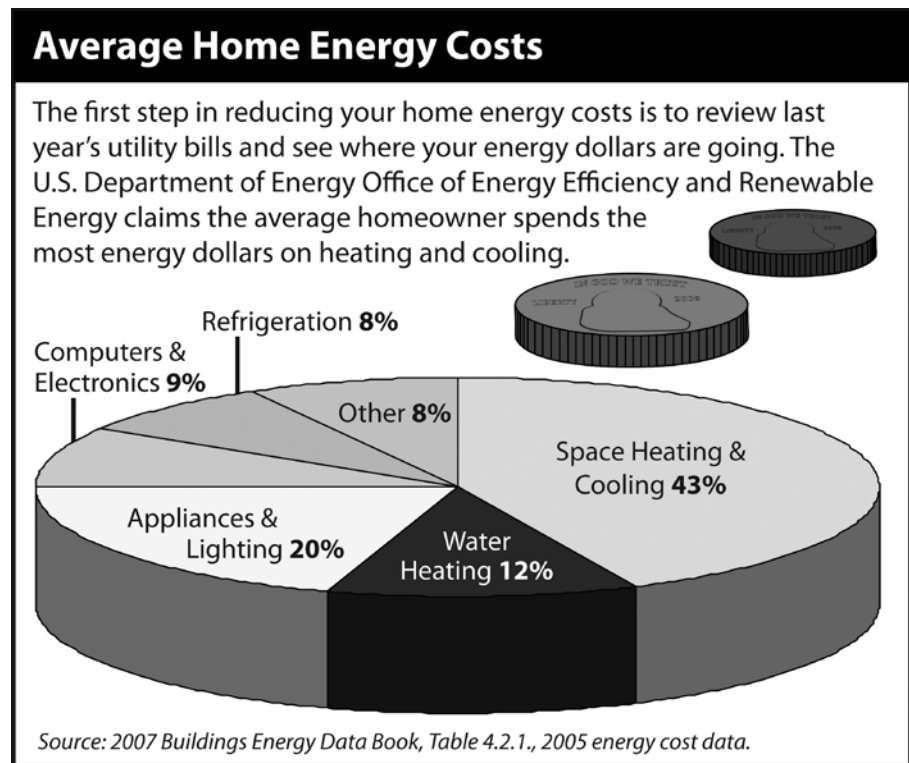
McDonough Power will soon offer professional home energy audits; in the meantime you can easily conduct a basic home energy audit with a simple but diligent walk-through. When auditing your home, keep a checklist of areas you have inspected and problems you find. Full lists are available online — Touchstone Energy Cooperatives® Home Energy Saver (at www.touchstoneenergysavers.com) and the Alliance to Save Energy Home Energy Checkup (search for it at www.ase.org) are both useful — and most trouble spots can be found in a few key areas.

Locating Air Leaks

First, make a list of obvious air leaks (drafts). The potential energy savings from reducing drafts in a home may range from 5 percent to 30 percent per year, with a much more comfortable residence as the result. Check for indoor air leaks, such as gaps along a baseboard or edge of the flooring and at junctures of walls and ceiling. **523D3-150C**

Inspect windows and doors for air leaks. If you can rattle them, movement means possible air leaks. If you can see daylight around a door or window frame, then the door or window has a leak; you can usually seal these through caulking or weather stripping.

On the outside, inspect all areas where two different building materi-



als meet, including all exterior corners, siding and chimney junctures, and areas where the foundation and the bottom of exterior brick or siding join. You should plug and caulk any holes or penetrations for faucets, pipes, electric outlets, and wiring.

Also, look for cracks and holes in the mortar, foundation, and siding, and seal them with the appropriate material. Check the exterior caulking around doors and windows, and see whether exterior storm doors and primary doors seal tightly.

When sealing any home, be aware of indoor air pollution and appliance "back drafts." Back drafting occurs when various appliances that burn fuels and

exhaust fans in the home compete for air. An exhaust fan may pull combustion gases back into the living space. This can obviously create a very dangerous and unhealthy situation.

Insulation

Heat loss through the ceiling and walls in your home could be very large if insulation levels are less than the recommended minimum. When your house was built, the builder likely installed the amount of insulation recommended (if any) at that time. Given today's energy prices (and future prices that will probably be higher), your insulation might

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be inadequate, especially if you have an older home. Online energy audits will provide more details on checking insulation levels in the attic, walls, and basement.

Heating/Cooling Equipment

Inspect heating and cooling equipment annually, or as recommended by the manufacturer. If you have a forced-air furnace, check filters and replace them as needed. Generally, you should change them about once every month or two, especially during periods of high use. Have a professional check and clean your equipment once a year.

Lighting

On average, lighting accounts for about 10 percent of a home's electric bill. Examine the wattage size of the light bulbs in your house. You may have 100-watt (or larger) bulbs where 60 or 75 watts would do. You should also consider compact fluorescent light bulbs for areas where lights are left on for hours at a time.

More information on both do-it-yourself and professional energy audits can be found at www.energysavers.gov. If you are interested in a professional audit of your home please contact McDonough Power at (309) 833-2101 for details.

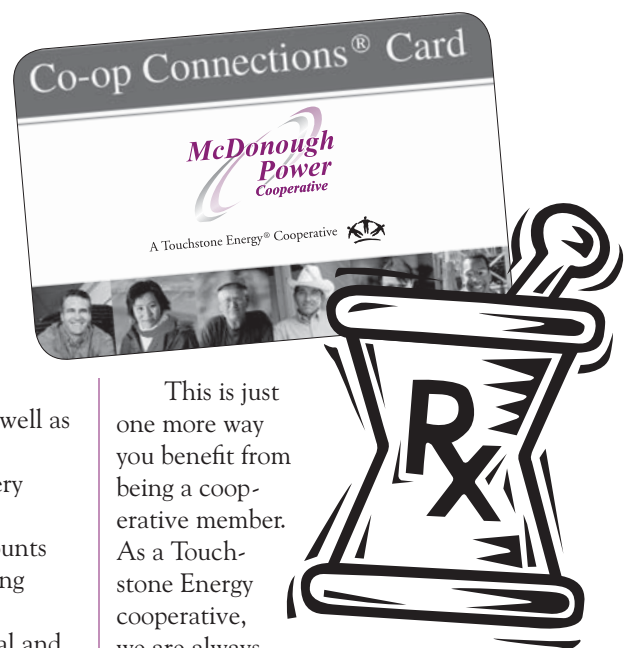
Article courtesy of the U.S. Department of Energy Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

Watch for your Co-op Connections card in October's issue of the Illinois Country Living

As a member of McDonough Power Cooperative, a Touchstone Energy cooperative, you can receive discounts on products and services from participating local and national businesses. The Co-op Connections member benefit program is absolutely free.

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This is just one more way you benefit from being a cooperative member. As a Touchstone Energy cooperative, we are always "Looking out for you".

Be on the lookout for your Co-op Connections card and key fobs to be included with the October issue of the Illinois Country Living.



SEALING MEANS SAVING AND COMFORT

Looking for an easy way to save money and improve your home's comfort? Try sealing your home. By taking steps to reduce what is known as air infiltration, you can significantly cut your annual energy costs and make your home more comfortable.

Air infiltration is unwanted air that leaks into your house through openings, cracks and other areas that aren't sealed as well as they should be. Your exterior walls, ceilings, floors, windows and doors form what is known as the home's "envelope." Just as a properly sealed paper envelope keeps the contents from leaking out, a properly sealed home keeps unwanted air from leaking in.

What do we mean by "unwanted" air? In the wintertime, you make your home more livable by heating the indoor air to a comfortable temperature, and using your furnace or heat pump to maintain that temperature. When cold air from outside is able to slip into your house, it begins to reduce the indoor temperature, and often creates drafts that make you feel colder. That means your furnace or heat pump has to work even harder to maintain the temperature. A similar situation happens when warm, humid outside air slips into your air-conditioned home.

Besides unwanted air, an improperly sealed home also invites other things you don't want in your home – such as pests, rodents and moisture that can lead to mold, mildew and wood rot. That's why sealing your home can help you protect its structural integrity and your

family's health, too.

You probably already notice some air leaks around familiar areas like doors and windows. Most people think that sealing those areas is the most important thing they can do to enhance comfort and energy savings, but extensive review of what saves money and what does not shows that major sources of air infiltration are usually more difficult to reach. Locating and sealing these areas can lead to dramatically improved comfort and energy savings:

- At attic access hatches located inside the home (maybe in a closet or hallway?)
- Where the walls and foundation meet **5311B3-260A**
- Where electric or telephone wires, gas lines or TV cables enter
- Around outdoor faucets and water pipes
- Where heating and cooling duct comes through the floor or ceiling – even that small space between the metal ductwork and the floor should be sealed
- While not part of the building envelope, all ductwork should be sealed so that the air you are paying to heat or cool gets to where you want it and doesn't leak out along the way.

Some homeowners worry that they may seal their homes too tightly. While it's true that you want to ensure that your home receives enough fresh air every day to have good indoor air quality, using air leaks for ventilation is a bad approach, especially when you don't control where that air enters or how



much is getting in. It's better to seal your home from the attic and crawlspace and use proper ventilation to control fresh air coming in.

One final thought: If you use any combustion appliances (anything powered by gas, propane or oil), have a certified heating and cooling technician check that those appliances will have adequate venting after you have performed your sealing measures. Otherwise, those items could allow dangerous gasses into your home.

Our Energy Advisor knows a lot about sealing homes, and can help you develop a better understanding of what sealing may do for you. That's just another way we give our members free advice when they want it and help when they need it.



Farm Equipment Safety

Imagine that you are driving a combine to the field through a back gate when things come to a screeching halt. You look back to see what's stopping you only to discover that you're tangled in an overhead power line! What do you do? 5310A8B-260A

First, DON'T climb out. Unless you're in immediate danger, stay where

you are and call for help.

Most utility lines are uninsulated, bare wires. Do not let your body become a direct link between the power line and the ground. If you must leave the combine, jump as far away as you can, making sure that **no part of your body touches the combine and the ground at the same time.**

Once you're off the combine, do not go back until your local electric co-op disconnects the power line.

Every year, 62 farm workers are electrocuted in the United States. You don't want to be one of them.

**Our office
will be closed
Monday, Sept. 7
for Labor Day.**

Map Location Game

Every month we will have four map location numbers hidden throughout The Wire. If you find your map location number, call our office and identify your number and the page that it is on. If correct, you will win a \$10 credit on your next electric bill.