

The Brillo Pad

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Top 10 Energy Wasters & Savers

Compact Fluorescent Lighting - One of the easiest things you can do is to change your light bulbs. It's best to switch out incandescent bulbs with CFLs in areas that are lit for extended periods of time, typically two hours or longer. Switching a CFL on and off too frequently will shorten its life. CFLs are four times more efficient (using 50 to 80 percent less energy) and last up to 10 times longer than typical incandescent bulbs, which have an average lifetime of 750 to 2,500 hours, while CFLs last from 6,000 to 10,000 hours. CFL bulbs can range from \$4 to \$15 depending on their type. This is much more than typical incandescent bulbs, but energy bill savings will more than pay for the extra cost of the lamps over their lifetime, and you will have to replace fewer bulbs. Installing motion sensors or timers on outdoor lights, instead of leaving the lights on during nighttime hours, can also help to reduce the electricity bill.

Programmable Thermostats - Install a programmable thermostat to set your heating and cooling equipment to automatically turn on or off to match your schedule and create a comfortable and energy-efficient living environment. These units typically offer savings of 10 to 15 percent and cost \$40 - \$100.

Fans - Fans used to supplement air conditioning save energy by permitting a higher thermostat setting. Air movement from the fan evaporates moisture on the skin and makes a person feel cooler. With this cooling effect, most people can raise their thermostat and feel just as comfortable. For every degree you raise the air conditioning thermostat above 78 degrees, you can save 3 percent to 5 percent on cooling costs.

Winterizing - Look for cracks and openings in the house that are letting cold air in during the winter and hot air in during the summer. Many leaks can be sealed with caulking and weather-stripping, which can greatly improve energy efficiency.

Tree Conservation - Properly placed trees and shrubs help to reduce your utility bills. Tree preservation reduces landscaping and future energy costs and helps provide winter wind breaks or summer shade. Deciduous trees planted on the west and south sides of your home help to keep your house shaded during the day's peak heating times. Plus, as an added benefit, one tree can filter 60 pounds of pollutants from the air each year.

ENERGY STAR® appliances - Choose energy-efficient appliances the next time you have to replace something. Federal ENERGY STAR-rated appliances are designed to use 10%-50% less energy and water than standard appliances and save an average of 30% over standard models. The up front cost is usually higher, but the payback over time should be well worth it.

Induction Cooktops - Rather than heating the cooking surfaces, the magnetic induction process turns the pot into the heating element. Food is heated more quickly and to precise temperatures. Cooking with magnetic induction is 90 percent efficient, as compared to resistance electric at approximately 65-percent efficiency, and open-flamed gas which measures in the 55-percent efficiency range. A magnetic induction cooktop costs three to four times more than an electric cook top. A magnetic induction cooktop with four elements ranges in price from \$1,800 to \$4,000, depending upon the manufacturer and features.

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Top 10 Energy Wasters & Savers

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High-Efficiency Refrigerators - Because a refrigerator is one of the most energy-consuming household appliances, federal regulations have mandated energy ratings and efficiency improvements for all refrigerators. New high-efficiency refrigerators exceed the federal energy requirements and can save consumers a substantial amount of money. Today's generation includes more insulation, high-efficiency compressors, better door seals, and more accurate control of temperature than older models. They use between 450 kWh per year (for a 15-cubic foot top-freezer model) and 850 kWh per year (for a 26.7 cubic foot side-by-side model). This compares with the past typical new home refrigerators (with top-freezer) that used about 700-kWh per year and the typical 1973 model that used nearly three times the electrical energy. Furthermore, refrigerators certified by the EPA/DOE ENERGY STAR® program must yield at least a 10% improvement over the federal standard. Replacing a ten-year-old refrigerator with a new, high-efficiency refrigerator can save a homeowner \$100 in average annual energy costs. (Dollar values assume a national average energy cost of \$0.084 per kWh.)

Front-loading clothes washers. Front-loading washers use less water, energy, and detergent. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, front-loading washing machines can use about 40 percent less water and 50 percent less energy than conventional washers, cause less wear and tear on clothes, and can accommodate large items that won't fit in a top-loader. A typical top-loading washer uses about 40 gallons of water per full load. In contrast, a full-size front-loading clothes washer uses between 20 and 25 gallons. Front-loading washers cost between \$600 and \$1,500, which is more expensive than top-loading machines. The estimated annual utility bill savings for a family of four is about \$75 to \$100 plus any additional savings associated with shorter drying time and reduced detergent use.

Insulation - You may consider adding insulation to your basement or attic, particularly if these areas are used as a bedroom or family room. The great thing about insulation is that it works in both hot and cold weather. When it is cold outside, insulation helps to prevent heat from flowing out of your house, and when it's warm outside, it helps to prevent heat transfer into your house. These days, you have a choice of insulation materials ranging from environmentally-friendly materials such as blown-in cellulose insulation, or energy-efficient spray foam insulation.

Energy-Efficient or Tankless Water Heater - Water heating typically accounts for 10 to 25 percent of the energy used in the home. If your water heater is over 20 years old, it is generally a good idea to get it replaced because today's models are much more efficient. Tankless water heaters provide hot water on demand at a preset temperature rather than storing it, which reduces or eliminates standby losses - with 10%-20% water heating savings for electric models. Gas savings may be about 20% -40% (\$50-\$100/yr). Equipment life may be longer than tank-type heaters because they are less subject to corrosion. The expected life of tankless water heaters is 20 years, compared with between 10 and 15 years for tank-type water heaters. Tankless water heaters range in price from \$200 for a small under-sink unit up to \$1,200 for a gas-fired unit that delivers 5 gallons per minute. Typically, the more hot water the unit produces, the more it will cost.

Right-Sized Equipment - When you decide to remodel, it's a great time to evaluate your home's heating/cooling equipment. Selecting more efficient, correctly sized heating and cooling equipment saves money. Remember that bigger does not always mean better. For the most efficient system, you really want your HVAC system to meet your needs – not surpass them. An oversized unit will cost more up front, plus your monthly bills can be higher. Oversized cooling equipment tends to cycle more frequently, which costs more to operate and can shorten the life of the unit. In the event you need to replace your central air conditioning unit, check for the ENERGY STAR label. If you find that your equipment doesn't need to be replaced, give it a tune-up and take care of any minor repairs or leaks to improve efficiency, and make sure your pipes and ducts are insulated.

High Performance Windows - Consider replacing single-pane windows. Double-pane windows with high performance glass (e.g., low emissivity or "low-e" glass) that are gas-filled perform much better and help reduce heat loss in the winter and heat gain in summer. Low-E coatings used to add about \$1 per square foot of glazing, however, in most climates this has become the standard. Low-E coatings save energy in most U.S. climates. In a simulation of a home located in Boston, low-E coating saved \$103 per year. Interior storm windows provide a compromise by increasing energy efficiency while maintaining exterior aesthetics at a significant cost savings over window replacement.

Stone & Tile Care

The following simple steps should be followed for proper stone and tile care.

DO	DON'T
Use sealer to protect your stone and tile.	Wait to clean up spills on stone – clean up as quickly as possible.
Clean up spills immediately to minimize damage to your stone and tile.	Use cleaners that contain acid such as bathroom cleaners, grout cleaners or tub and tile cleaners.
Use trivets or mats under hot dishes and cookware.	Use vinegar, bleach, ammonia or other general purpose cleaners.
Dust or carefully vacuum countertops, islands, vanities and floors frequently.	Use abrasive cleaners such as dry cleansers or soft cleansers.
Use coasters under glasses, especially of they contain alcohol or citrus juices.	Use alkaline cleaners not specifically formulated for stone.
Clean surfaces regularly.	
Place a small rug or a mat at entry ways to trap dirt and sand from normal foot traffic.	
Use place mats under china, ceramics, silver and other objects that can scratch your stone's surface.	
Call professionals for maintenance assistance.	

Wolf Appliance Recall

Wolf Appliance Inc. is voluntarily recalling about 24,000 Wolf Appliance gas ranges because delayed ignition of gas in the units' smaller oven can cause a flash of flames to be projected at a consumer when the range door is opened, posing a burn hazard to consumers. The US Consumer Product Safety Commission said Wolf has received 97 reports of units experiencing delayed ignition, including 15 minor burns. There have been no reports of fires or property damage.

The units with model numbers P48, PS48 and R48 were sold by home builders and appliance stores nationwide from January 1998 through June 2008 for between \$5,000 and \$9,000. The gas ranges are stainless steel with a double oven. A "Wolf" appliance logo is on the front of the larger oven door.

Consumers should contact the manufacturer at (866) 643-6408 to schedule a free, in-home repair.

18th Annual Milwaukee NARI Fall Home & Remodeling Show

The 18th Annual Milwaukee NARI Fall Home & Remodeling Show is Friday, September 26th to Sunday, September 28th at the Wisconsin Exposition Center at State Fair Park. The theme is "Dream... Design... Do!"

Over 200 exhibitors will feature providers of home improvement and remodeling products and services, including design/build, kitchens, decks, cabinets, windows, bathrooms, lighting, landscaping, roofing and fireplaces. Our booths are 537 and 636 so stop by if you are planning on attending.

Throughout the Show, educational presentations by celebrities and home improvement experts will be held. Our own Bob Quigley, Leigh Grobarchik and Bob Sebastian are on several panel discussions on Friday. John Gidding from HGTV's "Designed to Sell" will also be present and area chefs will prepare their favorite recipes. Other attractions include an Interior Design Showplace Display, a "Relaxation Station," a Solar Panel Replica House and the Sherwin Williams Paints Interactive Display.

As in years past, we do have a limited supply of courtesy tickets available on a first come, first serve basis. Please call Maggie to reserve yours today.



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We welcome your suggestions, comments, questions and story ideas.

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