



Lower home heating costs safely with tips from the Red Cross

To help cut down on the expense of keeping your house warm this winter, the Red Cross offers these suggestions on getting your home ready for the cold weather. If you plan to use a space heater or alternate source of heat, follow the tips below to prevent home heating fires.

GETTING READY FOR WINTER

- Change the filters on your furnace and if possible, have it cleaned by a professional.
- Make sure heat vents aren't blocked by furniture.
- Turn down the thermostat and put on a sweater. You'll be surprised at the savings on your heating bill.
- Close off any rooms you aren't using and close heat vents or turn off radiators in those rooms.
- Drafts mean cold air is leaking into your home. Use either insulating tape or caulking strips to surround your windows and door moldings. You can cover your windows with plastic sheeting. If you have storm windows or storm doors, use them to keep cold air out.
- If you can, buy heavy curtains to prevent cold drafts, even in the kitchen. Open them during the day to let the sun help warm your house, and close them at night. Use "fabric snakes," or old rugs in front of windows and doors to help eliminate drafts.
- Insulate your light switch and outlet plates with foam pads. Cold air can seep into the house through them.
- Cover your hot water heater with insulating material. You'll use less energy to heat the water.
- If your home sits above-ground and some of your pipes are exposed, wrap them to save on energy and prevent freezing.
- Turn off any outside faucets, drain your hose, and cover the faucets. Use caulking or weather stripping around all pipes where they enter your home - yet another way to eliminate drafts.
- If you plan to use a wood burning fireplace to cut down on your heating bill, first get your chimney cleaned and inspected by a professional. Close the damper when the fireplace is not in use to keep heat from escaping through it.
- Remember, heat rises. Block off rooms upstairs you don't use during the day to keep the heat downstairs.

- Turn off vent fans in the kitchen and bathroom as soon as the job is done.
- Use your ceiling fans and re-set them to blow warm air down in the winter.

PROPER USE OF ALTERNATE HEATERS

Install smoke alarms on every floor of your home and outside sleeping areas.

- Stay in the kitchen when you are frying, grilling or broiling food. If you leave the kitchen for even a short period of time, turn off the stove.
- Keep fire in the fireplace by using glass or metal fire screens. Never leave a fire in the fireplace unattended, extinguish the fire before going to bed or leaving the house and provide constant adult supervision in rooms with fires lit.
- Have wood and coal stoves, fireplaces and chimneys inspected annually by a professional and cleaned, if necessary.
- Appliances are for cooking, not heating: never use a cooking range or oven to heat your home.
- Keep all flammable materials and potential fuel sources - including but not limited to newspapers, matches, bedding, clothing, carpets and rugs - at least three feet away from heat sources such as space heaters, fireplaces and stoves.
- Space heaters: Whether operating on electricity, gas, kerosene, coal or wood, read and follow the manufacturer's instructions on how, when and where to safely use them. Place space heaters on a level, hard and nonflammable surface such as ceramic tile floor not on rugs or carpets or near bedding or drapes. Turn off portable space heaters every time you leave the room or go to sleep. Keep children and pets away from space heaters. Do not use space heaters to dry wet clothing.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services offers those in need help with their utility bills through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). To find out if you qualify and learn how to apply for this assistance contact your LIHEAP [State grantee](#), [Indian Tribe or Tribal Organization grantee](#), or [Insular Area grantee](#). You can also contact the National Energy Assistance Referral (NEAR) project at 1-866-674-6327, or by emailing them at energy.assistance@ncat.org.