

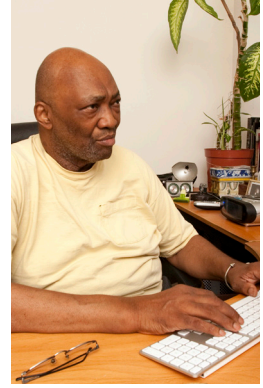


Connecting You to Community Services



Winter Warmth and Safety:

Home Energy Tips for Older Adults



Everyone appreciates a warm, comfortable home during the cold winter months. Yet with escalating energy costs, many older Americans will find it a challenge to keep up with home heating bills this winter. With a little planning and preparation, you can reduce the amount you owe and still stay warm during the winter. The Eldercare Locator and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) offer some economical ways to stay warm and safe at home.

Find out about financial energy assistance programs

- Many states, counties and cities provide programs that assist older adults with winter heating costs. Your local Area Agency on Aging is a good source of information about available community programs and eligibility requirements. To identify the Area Agency on Aging serving your community, contact the **Eldercare Locator** at 800.677.1116 or www.eldercare.gov.
- Ask about the **Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**—the federally funded program that helps eligible low-income homeowners and renters meet home heating needs. The name of this program and eligibility requirements may vary across states. Be mindful that there is an application deadline for assistance, except for emergency situations. Depending on where you live, LIHEAP may offer one or more of the following types of help:
 - Heating funds (i.e., fuel subsidies) to increase the affordability of home energy;
 - Low-cost residential weatherization and other home repairs to safely increase the efficiency of a household's use of home energy, thus lowering energy bills and making homes more comfortable; and
 - Energy crisis intervention to address weather-related and fuel supply shortages and other household energy-related emergencies, such as utility shutoffs.

For details about LIHEAP, contact: 866.674.6327 or [http:// www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap/grantees/states.html](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap/grantees/states.html).

- Get information about the **Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP)**. Most state and local governments receive federal funds to help low-income families permanently reduce their energy bills by making their homes more energy efficient. WAP assistance is free and preference is given to people over age 60 and households with children or people with disabilities. You must apply to determine eligibility.

WAP services are provided by local nonprofit agencies that employ energy professionals. They will thoroughly analyze your energy systems for safety and determine the most cost-effective energy upgrades for your home. This means that in addition to making minor repairs such as adding insulation, they will also check for hazards such as carbon monoxide, indoor air quality problems from mold and outdated electrical equipment and wiring.

To identify the WAP in your area, contact: 877.337.3463 or [http:// www.eere.energy.gov/weatherization/state_contacts.cfm](http://www.eere.energy.gov/weatherization/state_contacts.cfm).

Be aware of help provided by utility companies

- Check with your gas, water and electricity suppliers to see if they offer a monthly budget plan to help spread out energy costs throughout the year. Often they have special heating assistance funds, as well as “no cut off” guidelines to avoid termination of service for older adults, people with disabilities and ill customers who may have difficulty paying their bills.
- Utility companies are also a great source for energy conservation information. They might be able to refer you to an expert to inspect your home for ways to make it more energy efficient, or provide a list of contractors to tune up your furnace so that it operates at peak efficiency.

Look for ways to cut down on winter energy use

- The **ENERGY STAR Program**, run by the U.S. EPA offers tips to help make your home more energy efficient (888.782.7937 or [http:// www. energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)). ENERGY STAR is a widely recognized and trusted label that identifies and promotes energy-efficient products, including major appliances, office equipment, lighting, home electronics and more. These products can help you save about one third on energy bills without sacrificing features, style or comfort.
- Simple, inexpensive energy-saving things you can do yourself:
 - Have a friend or relative seal air leaks. Weather strip and insulate the attic hatch or door to prevent warm air from leaking out of the house. Replace your screens with storm windows to provide an extra barrier to the cold outside air.
 - Use a programmable thermostat that can automatically adjust the temperature of your home when you are asleep or away. To maximize savings without sacrificing comfort, program the thermostat to lower the heat by 8 degrees Fahrenheit or more when away and asleep.



- Dirt and neglect are the number one causes of heating system failure, so be sure to schedule a fall checkup of your heating equipment with a licensed contractor to make sure your system is operating at peak performance. Also, check your system's air filter every month and when it is dirty, change it. At a minimum change it every three months.
- While a log fire in your fireplace is attractive, it does not efficiently heat your home. Your chimney creates a draft that removes the combustion byproducts from a fire. That same draft also pulls air from your home up the chimney – air that you have paid to heat with your heating system. So be sure to close your fireplace damper when not in use, and consider the use of a fireplace “balloon” to make it even tighter. Fireplace balloons and other “chimney plugs” will save energy. But you must remember to remove them before lighting a fire in the fireplace.

Ensure your health and safety

- In addition to addressing the need to stay warm during winter, consider safety as well. For example:
 - Avoid the risk of home fires. Do not use your stove or oven to heat your home. Keep batteries and battery-powered flashlights available. When needed, use flashlights instead of candles. Check to make sure that electrical cords on space heaters are not damaged and do not pose a tripping hazard.
 - Make sure that smoke and carbon monoxide detectors are installed and working properly. It is recommended that you replace the batteries at least once a year. As a reminder, pick a holiday or your birthday and replace the batteries each year on that day.
 - Insulate water pipes to avoid freezing and bursting. When freezing temperatures are expected, leave water taps slightly open so they drip continuously. Drain and turn off outside water spouts.
 - Have a fire extinguisher ready to use. Fire extinguishers should be inspected at least once a year to assure they will operate effectively and safely when needed. Consult your telephone directory or local fire department for fire extinguisher service.



Have a back-up plan

- Before you need them, consider alternative arrangements should extreme weather conditions require emergency action.
 - Identify temporary living arrangements in case you are unable to stay in your own home and have a plan for getting there.
 - Keep in touch with family and friends. Ask someone to check on you daily—especially if you live alone.
 - Plan for your medical needs. Have extra medications on hand or identify a pharmacy that will deliver them to you.
 - If you or a loved one in your home has medical equipment, be sure you know how it will need to be maintained or moved in an emergency.
 - Share emergency contact information with everyone who would need it.

Indoor Pollutants and Carbon Monoxide Information

In winter, most people spend a majority of their time indoors. It is important to remember that pollutants are not only outdoors, but they can be indoors too. Be aware of possible indoor pollutants in your home and take steps to reduce your exposure.

- Avoid smoking and second hand smoke. Fix water leaks promptly and eliminate mold. Clean up pet dander, dust, pollens and other fine particles as these can cause health problems and trigger an asthma attack.
- Carbon monoxide (CO) poisoning is the most common cause of poisoning death in the U.S.
- There are approximately 500 deaths and 15,000 visits to the emergency room that occur annually due to unintentional CO poisoning.
- You can prevent CO poisoning by installing a CO monitor to alert you if there is a dangerous level of carbon monoxide in your home.
- Install a CO and smoke detector in your home. Make sure that your detectors are working properly.
- The batteries should be replaced at least once a year. Choose a holiday or your birthday to replace the batteries each year.



Connecting You to Community Services

800.677.1116

www.eldercare.gov

www.facebook.com/eldercarelocator

The Eldercare Locator is the first step to finding resources for older adults in any U.S. community and a free national service funded by a grant from the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA). The Eldercare Locator is administered by the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a).

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) leads the nation's environmental science, research, education and assessment efforts to protect human health and the environment.



RESOURCES LISTED IN THIS PUBLICATION

- Eldercare Locator, 800.677.1116, <http://www.eldercare.gov>
- ENERGY STAR Program, 888.782.7937, <http://www.energystar.gov>
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), 866.674.6327, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/liheap>
- U. S. EPA Aging Initiative, <http://www.epa.gov/aging>
- Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), 877.337.3463



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Administration on Aging

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