



## **How to Make Your Bay Area Home More Energy Efficient in the Winter**

When the weather turns colder, the furnace often comes on, which in turn drives your energy bills upward. Keeping your home as energy efficient as possible is the best way to lower your energy costs without sacrificing your family's comfort level. Fortunately, there are plenty of strategies Bay Area families can use to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

### **Manage Airflow**

Reducing the amount of air that flows into and out of your house is one of the easiest ways to reduce the cost of heating your home. To conserve your home's warm air and block the cold from outside, consider installing heavy drapes during the colder months of the year. You can also prevent heat loss from within the home by turning off kitchen and bathroom fans as soon as you are finished with them. To improve the flow of air within your home, make sure that all of your vents are free of obstructions that may prevent them from dispersing air efficiently. When vents are blocked, your furnace must work harder to maintain the temperature of your home.

### **Control the Thermostat**

When it comes to saving money, turning down your thermostat is one of the most effective strategies available. However, few people want to keep the temperature at uncomfortable levels while they are at home. To use this strategy without sacrificing comfort, consider investing in a programmable thermostat. Turn the temperature down ten degrees while you are at work, and program the thermostat so that the house will be warmer by the time you come home. If you go away for an extended period of time, such as for vacation, keep the temperature lower in your home until you get back.

### **Weather Strip Leaks**

Weather stripping is a process that involves using insulation material to seal the leaks in your windows, doors and other vulnerable areas in order to prevent your home from losing heat. If you decide to weather strip your home, you can seal only the windows, or, if you wish to take on a larger project, you can seal the leaks in your HVAC system, doors and attic space.

## **Change Light bulbs**

Though it may not make your home warmer on its own, changing your regular light bulbs to compact fluorescent bulbs will still save you money. These bulbs produce the same amount of visible light with only one-fifth of the energy expenditure. Fluorescent bulbs also last more than eight times as long as standard light bulbs.

## **Energy Upgrade California**

If you are willing to take on a larger project, the [Energy Upgrade California](#) program can offer an extra incentive for improving the energy efficiency of your home. Under this program, homeowners have two options: the basic upgrade, which offers up to \$1,000 in incentives, or the advanced upgrade package, which offers up to \$4,000. To earn the incentive for the basic upgrade package, you must pass combustion safety tests, install a thermostatic control valve, insulate your hot water pipes, seal your ducts and seal any air leaks found in your home. To earn incentives for the advanced upgrade package, you must complete all of the measures required for the basic upgrade package, and you must also install a high-efficiency furnace, install an energy-efficient cooling system, install an efficient water heater system, install energy efficient windows, replace your ducts and insulate your walls. Regardless of which package you complete, your exact incentives will depend on the estimated amount of money your upgrades will save you.

For many families, the winter months are expensive and stressful. However, by implementing these energy-saving strategies, you can keep your home warm without breaking your budget.