

Experts Offer Advice

Heating systems should be serviced annually by a qualified technician.

by Brenda Kleinjan

FALL HAS ARRIVED AND WINTER IS AROUND THE corner. Just as the summer clothes are packed away and the winter clothing come out of storage, there are basic preparations one can make to ready one's home or business for the cold winter months ahead. The energy experts at your local Touchstone Energy® Cooperative offer some tips and other suggestions for getting ready.

- 1. Seal up any leaks.** An 1/8th-inch gap around a door can leak as much air into a home as a hole measuring approximately three inches by 5.5 inches in the middle of the wall. The same goes for leaky windows. Other areas to look at: areas where



your plumbing, television, telephone, water, cable and other utilities come into a home.

Caulk, plastic window covering and weather stripping can have a tremendous impact in sealing up leaks that are only costing you money. Expandable spray foam applied to a home's sill plate to the basement wall will also increase energy efficiency.

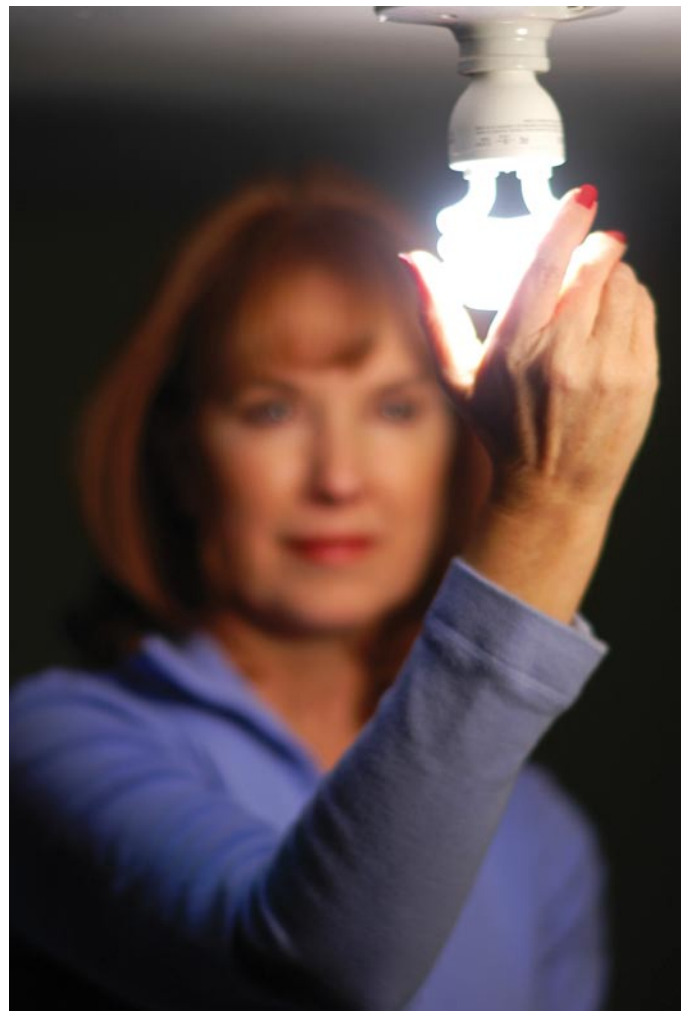
"It's one of the most common things you find that is needed in homes and it's something that any homeowner can do," said Rich Johnson, member services director at FEM Electric Association in Ipswich.

- 2. Change a filter, get a tune up.** Heating systems should be serviced annually by a qualified technician. This will not only help keep the system operating properly, it will also extend the system's life. Also, most air filters should be changed monthly. Make sure you're following the recommendations laid out in your system's owner's manual.



for Energy Savings

- 3. Change a light bulb.** Winter brings longer nights and shorter days, so the amount of time interior lights are kept on increases. Whether you're a renter or a homeowner, changing your home's 10 most-used light bulbs from 60-watt incandescent bulbs to 14-watt compact fluorescent bulbs will save nearly \$400 over the life of the bulbs. Look for bulbs that are Energy Star® rated and emit the color light that you want in your home.
- 4. Get tested.** Once you've conquered the obvious leaks around your home, consider having a blower door test done on your home. Local community action groups will conduct the test for a fee. This test will help identify areas in your home that need to be sealed, decreasing the amount of money you're wasting on heating the outdoors.
- 5. Increase your insulation.** Attic insulation should be at least 12 inches deep (bringing its R-value to at least R-38) and basement insulation should be at least R-10. Outside walls should be insulated to at least one foot below ground.
- 6. Get audited.** Your Touchstone Energy Cooperatives offer an online home energy audit which will help you assess your family's energy use. The online audit can be found at www.touchstoneenergy.coop.
- 7. Look up the chimney.** If you have a woodburning fireplace, make sure the chimney is clean and that the fireplace can be closed off by glass doors. Otherwise, the fireplace is one giant opening that heat rises through and escapes your home.
- 8. Get an update.** If your water heater or heating system is more than 10 years old, call your professional contractor (or your local Touchstone Energy Cooperative) to see how much you can save on your bills by installing a high-efficiency electric water heater or a heat pump.
- 9. Check out Energy Star appliances.** If you're in the market for a new kitchen or laundry appliance, look into the money- and energy-saving features of Energy Star-rated appliances. In the case of a front-



- loading washing machine, you'll see a savings in water consumption as well as electricity use. Moisture sensors in dryers also help cut electricity use.
- 10. Get detected.** Occupancy sensors for light switches will automatically turn lights on and off. It's a great fix for hallways or other areas where you're constantly telling the kids (or your spouse) to turn off the lights.
 - 11. Turn it off.** If you're not using it, turn it off. It's one of the simplest energy efficiency tools you have at your disposal.