



Cheap Ways to Keep Warm

Tips on Keeping Your House Warm & Reducing Furnace Use

by Patty Kubitzki

SecretsFromTheHeart.com

Even during sub-zero temperatures my furnace is only running about one-third of the time with my thermostat set at 68 degrees using many of the following tips.

Windows and Doors –

Check windows and door for air leaks. If you can't apply weather-stripping now, opt for a temporary solution. I found small bubble wrap or rags pushed into cracks, such as tops of doors, with a screwdriver tip works great.

Lay a rolled towel or draft catcher at the base of an exterior door or one going to the garage.

If you have a metal exterior door the cold goes right through them. Hang a twin-size bed pad on the inside using the two top elastic straps to catch the top two corners of the door.

At night be sure to close all blinds and curtains. Heavy curtains are best or hang a blanket from the rod for extra warmth.

During the day, open the curtains and blinds especially if the sun is shining to let passive solar heat in.

Try to keep the doors closed as much as possible and not to go in and out a lot.

Garage Door –

Make sure it is resting on the pavement when closed and not on top of ice or snow. Clear any build up.

Watch for melting snow and ice coming off vehicles and flowing back to the door, freezing into ice and lifting the door. That would allow cold air to rush inside.

Space Heaters –

Use oil-filled electric space heaters in designated areas. I keep one in my home office with a make-shift curtain (blanket with a rod pocket sewn on one end and hang by a shower curtain rod) hanging in the doorway. This keeps the heat in the room instead of going up the stairs in my split-level house. Also keeping one in my bedroom allows me to turn my main thermostat down lower at night. I

have used this system with oil heaters for years and keep them running non-stop in the winter when temperatures dip below freezing. These heaters are safe, quiet and emit a low steady heat.

! WARNING – Do not use other heaters in this way, as most are not designed as safe!

Fireplaces –

Check around your fireplace for obvious air leaks.

Be sure the damper is closed.

If your fireplace has doors on it, fold a blanket or small area rug and lay it in front where intake air would go in.

If your mantle exterior has boards on each side, you might be able to hang a blanket from a shower curtain rod to stop drafts.

Don't use the fireplace when it gets too cold (until your heat goes off) as you will likely lose more heat up the chimney than you will gain.

Oven Heat –

When temperatures drop it's a good time to bake more, which will add extra heat and wonderful aromas to your home and baked goods to eat. When done baking, turn off the oven but leave the door ajar until the oven is cool to allow the oven heat to warm your home. I remember when I was young and we lost electric power. The gas still worked and we had a gas stove so we ran the oven on low, which gave us enough warmth to stay in the house.

! WARNING - Always use extra caution when using any method to add warmth that is different than usual, especially if children or pets are in the house.

Ceiling Fans –

Run ceiling fans on low, air blowing upwards, especially in vaulted ceiling rooms. This will circulate the air and pull the warmer air down and make your furnace more efficient.

Furnace Air Flow –

Replace furnace filter or clean according to recommended filter maintenance, usually monthly. Use your vacuum attachment to remove heavy dust deposits from heat and return air vents. When possible, remove vent covers and vacuum inside to remove additional debris. Maintain furnace humidifier, checking water flow and media pad. Media pads should be replaced every year or so. Plugged plastic water lines can be easily replaced. Inline water filters can be installed on humidifier and refrigerator icemaker lines to greatly reduce shut off valve failure.

Unused Areas –

Close Off Unused Rooms. Shut heat vents, cover the return vent and put a rolled up towel at the base in front of the closed door.

Tile Flooring –

Cover cold floors with additional area rugs, blankets or towels. Use extra caution to avoid slipping on loose coverings.

Clothes Dryer Heat –

If possible, when using your clothes dryer, vent the exhaust air into your home. Special diverters can be purchased at the hardware stores for this purpose. It will also add extra moisture to the air. If it becomes too much, only divert the air during the second half of the drying cycle. To save on dryer run time (and wear on your clothes) remove jeans, sweaters and delicates after drying only 10 minutes. Hang them up until drying is complete.

Layer It On –

Wear extra layers, even in the house. Double up on sweaters and socks. Wear stretch pants, hose, or sweats under jeans or slacks, etc. If your house is very cold, you might want to even wear a hat inside, pile lined boots and even fingerless gloves.

Move Your Body –

Keeping active will help with your circulation and keep you warmer. While you might want to just sit and cuddle up under a blanket, be sure to take time to move that body and generate some internal heat.

Create a Mini Mart –

Keep extra supplies on hand in case you aren't able to get out. Use part of a spare closet and make your own 'Mini Mart'. Think of what you might need if you lose power. Extra canned good, gelled fuel such as sterno for cooking, bottled water, candles, flashlights, batteries, medical and health supplies, toiletries, laundry detergent. I started my Mini Mart quite some time ago and find it very handy to extra supplies there all the time.

Travel Smart –

Make few trips outside. Getting stranded with car problems with temperatures below freezing can be life threatening. Keep your car gas tank at least half way full. Carry drinking water, blankets, extra clothes, basic tools, cell phone, weather-band radio. If you are traveling any distance, be sure to check roadway information.

Conserve –

Try to not waste; food, water, electricity, gas. Cut back where you can, not only to help keep the expense down but also so there is more to go around for others. Shut off the shower when you soap up and opt for a sink 'spit bath' every

other day instead of a full shower or bath. If bathing, don't immediately empty the water when you finish. Let the heat come into your home. Do the same with dishwater. Put off what you can until it warms up a bit to conserve on energy use. These times are when power companies are running at full capacity and system overload can shut down the grid, which is the last thing we would want.

Buddy Up –

Share rides, meals or living spaces as needed. Keep in closer touch with family and friends. Periods of extended cold weather work against us in many ways. Connecting with others reminds us that we aren't in this alone. Encouraging, caring and sharing with others will help our own peace of mind.

Clear the Snow, Treat for Ice –

We know to clear the snow from driveways, walks and cars but don't forget about decks, bushes, small trees, fire hydrants and mail boxes.

Slow Down, Prepare & Think Ahead, Be Extra Patient –

Whether you are inside, outside, driving, or not, you will likely have fewer accidents and less stress when you go slower than normal, think ahead to be more prepared and be extra patient of others and patient for this time to pass.

Make a Note –

During cold weather, make a note of the things to address when warmer weather comes, i.e. weather-stripping, getting thermal windows, more insulation, etc. And when the temperature does come up, try to take as many steps as possible to correct those issues.

Keep Current –

Check the local news and weather at least twice a day. Keep current on school, church and road closings, event cancellations and special warnings and updates.

**This cold weather won't last forever.
Do what you can to make things better
and remember that this will be behind us soon.**

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