



As a project manager for Avante Properties, Karyl Lynn Bruckner is keenly aware of the importance of winterizing your home and has a detailed checklist of maintenance she performs on her property located in Madison's Westmorland neighborhood. She works from "the top down." Her list includes everything from annual furnace tune-ups to checking weather stripping, cleaning gutters, draining outside hoses and storing them for winter, checking thermostat batteries and more.

# Save the Earth, Save Money

## Tips for making your home lean and green

Story by Amanda N. Wegner / Photo by Shanna Wolf

Summer cannot last forever, even if it came a few weeks late. As cold weather approaches, don't let your money leak out through the cracks. These days, energy efficiency is more than a catchphrase; it's a way of life.

"Homeowners are becoming more interested in energy efficiency," says Carter Dedolph, home program manager for Wisconsin Energy Conservation Corporation, which runs Focus on Energy. "We have had about the same number of homeowners participate in the program during the first six months of 2009 as had in all of 2007 or 2008."

But there's no one-size-fits-all approach to winterizing your home, explains Jonathan Beers, Residential Services Manager at Madison Gas and Electric Company (MGE). "It's kind of like asking a doctor what people need to be healthy. There are some general suggestions, but each home has specific needs."

Why? Because older homes tend to be less energy-efficient than newer homes. With that in mind, read on for winterizing tips and projects that might help you save energy while saving money.

### KNOW YOUR USAGE

MGE offers an online tool to show how your natural gas usage stacks up to other houses built at the same time. You can also compare usage (both gas and electric) year to year. Knowing these numbers gives you a benchmark to achieve greater energy efficiency. If you have Alliant Energy, you can

review your energy usage as well. An online audit tool they offer, My Home Comfort Check Up, pinpoints energy wasters and offers way to improve your home's efficiency ([www.alliantenergy.com](http://www.alliantenergy.com)).

### KNOW YOUR EFFICIENCY

If you have an older home, consider a Home Performance by Energy Star assessment. The Home Performance with Energy Star professionals are trained to identify the cause of problems or potential issues in your home and provide you with solutions. In Wisconsin, start by calling Focus on Energy to schedule an in-home assessment (800-762-7077). The consultant will run a battery of tests to determine what projects will yield the greatest energy savings, and then you decide what to do or not do.

### GET A TUNE-UP

While it's easy for a homeowner to

change the furnace filter every few months, furnaces need regular tune-ups, too. The contractor will do things such as inspect the thermostat for proper operation, check all electrical components and controls and inspect heat exchanger for possible cracks.

It might also be a good idea to have your ducts cleaned. The home's HVAC ductwork continually fills with dust and other particles, which build up over time. Having your ductwork cleaned not only increases your HVAC system's efficiency, but also minimizes the circulation of allergens.

### SET IT BACK

If you don't have one already, get a setback thermostat. In the fall and winter, lower the thermostat at night and when you're away (by at least five degrees); 55°F should be the lowest setting. You'll save one percent for every one-degree temperature decrease for an eight-hour setback.

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<p><b>7036 Devedrop Drive, Madison</b></p> <p><b>MLS# 1588106</b> - Eat-in kitchen w/ stainless steel appliances, breakfast bar, granite &amp; access to a 10 x 13 deck. Master with full bath and walk-in closet; 10-panel doors/abundance of windows--hard landscaping, water &amp; decor--landscaping. Bobbie Swenson... (608) 288-3322</p>	<p><b>6513 Fairhaven Road, Madison</b></p> <p><b>MLS# 1548510</b> - Contemporary &amp; quality workmanship throughout. Lit beautifully designed fireplace w/ custom lighting. Kitchen island and granite counter tops, maple cabinets, appliances &amp; wood flooring. Master bath w/ tiled walk-in shower. 2 level vinyl set in solid vinyl cabinet. Bobbie Swenson... (608) 288-3322</p>	<p><b>1316 Sandt Lane, Stoughton</b></p> <p><b>MLS# 1551563</b> - Custom 2-story has open floor plan to take in the beauty of the wooded lot &amp; surrounding. Wood floors, open-plan kitchen, great room w/ fireplace and bar area, 3-season porch. High-master suite w/ double vanity, jacket tub &amp; separate shower. Walk-out lower level w/ wet bar, wine rack, 11 entry room. Karl Nasson Hyatt... (608) 205-0238</p>	<p><b>3296 Brookmyr Drive, Durand</b></p> <p><b>MLS# 1581166</b> - Lovely lakefront home w/ wrap-around deck on the south side of Lake Kegonsa. Open floor plan. 4th &amp; 2nd story w/ windows facing the lake. 2 fireplaces, master suite w/ private linen closet, lower level w/ hardwood floors, fireplace, 24' pool and terrace. Backhouse w/ living space &amp; storage. Ann Conradi... (608) 895-7675</p>
<p><b>2753 Esquire Drive, Pleasant Springs</b></p> <p><b>MLS# 1588540</b> - 3 bedrooms, 3.5 bath colonial is close to Lake Kegonsa &amp; State Park. Over 70 year old has modern landscaping. The LR has a gas FP w/ brick surround. Kitchen has tile of cabinets, tiled backsplash &amp; breakfast bar. LR has walk-in closet &amp; access to large deck. LL has wet bar to party covered patio. Master suite has full bath w/ walk-in closet. Judy Spinguel... (608) 205-3224</p>	<p><b>1020 Derby Drive, Sun Prairie</b></p> <p><b>MLS# 1526772</b> - Kogon's Half-ton model. Classic floor plan, featuring great room w/ gas fireplace &amp; sunny kitchen w/ breakfast bar, pantry &amp; lots of cabinets &amp; counter space. \$2,000 appliance allowance. 1st floor laundry. Master has 3/4 bath &amp; large walk-in closet. Walk-out basement. Quality construction w/ Energy Star Certification. Deb Veal... (608) 229-8509</p>	<p><b>2214 Stauffer Drive, Fitchburg</b></p> <p><b>MLS# 1586598</b> - Ranch home on cul-de-sac and wooded lot. This ranch home has finished basement w/ a bath, laundry in main level. Vaulted ceilings in living/dining areas. Deck off dining area into spacious and wooded back yard. Kathy Bartels... (608) 238-2902</p>	<p><b>9 Kingswood Circle, Madison</b></p> <p><b>MLS# 1586578</b> - Hawks Landing, spectacular ranch w/ wide open floor plan. 4BR, 3.5BA, 3 fireplaces, 3-car garage. Great for entertaining. Kitchen offers granite tile counter tops, maple glass cabinets, breakfast bar and double area leading to deck. Renata McCarthy... (608) 576-9405</p>

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**SWITCH IT OUT OR WRAP IT UP**

If you have an electric water heater, switch to a high-efficiency gas model. Set the water heater's thermostat to 120°F to save energy and reduce the risk of scalding. If buying new isn't in the budget, wrap it up with a water heater blanket. This is an easy DIY project that costs between \$10 and \$30 and can save four to nine percent in water-heating costs.

**CHECK FOR DRAFTS**

This will be done if you complete a Home Performance with Energy Star assessment. If you have a newer home or choose to forego that service, it's still important to check for drafts. The main culprits are under and around doors and windows. With windows, start by locking them to press them firmly into place. If you notice the curtains or blinds moving on a windy day, there are leaks around your windows, so try weather-stripping them. For doors, start by raising the threshold to reduce drafts beneath if it's adjustable. If it's not, install one. Doors can also be weather-stripped. Additionally, seal around the sewer vent pipe in basement; check the attic to keep in heated air; and close the fireplace damper after the fire is out to stop drafts and save money.

**OPEN AND SHUT**

Let the sun in during the day to reduce heating costs. Close drapes and shades at night to keep the heat in.

**SMART LIGHTING**

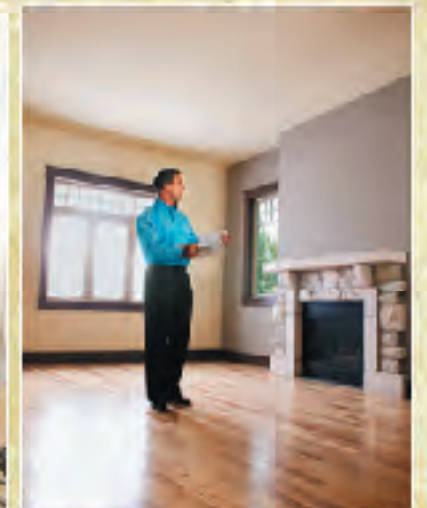
With fewer hours of sunlight, homeowners keep their lights on longer. At minimum, switch out your five most used incandescent light bulbs with CFLs.

Whether you have a lot or a little to spend on winterizing activities for your home this season, these tips and projects are sure to help you reap savings, big and small. **mb**

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