

OCTOBER IS ENERGY AWARENESS MONTH

by

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October is National Energy Awareness Month. Observed since 1991, President George H. W. Bush installed it to encourage governmental organizations to raise the visibility of the importance of conservation, sustainability, and awareness of the importance of managing the nation's energy resources in a responsible way. Promoted by the Department of Energy (DOE) each year in October, National Energy Awareness Month is the public promotion of understanding of our energy needs and some simple ideas that everyone can use to reduce their energy footprint by reducing waste.

Homeowners are acutely aware of how important energy efficiency is for reducing monthly costs. One way that people can see how to make their house more efficient is to perform an energy audit. This is the first step to take in order to assess how much energy your home not only consumes, but also what aspects can be improved upon. While it is recommended to have a professional home energy audit done, there are steps that you can take in order to identify where deficiencies currently are in your house.

One easily identifiable way to conserve energy is to identify air leaks within the house. The average house uses over 35% of its total energy cost on heating and cooling. Drafts tend to be one of the more costly inefficiencies within the home, but in order to rectify the situation, one must first discover the area where the drafts are located. Many times, those areas are in plain sight, around windows, doors, the corners of houses, and air ducts. Another place people might not think about checking for drafts are around your cable or internet wires and electric sockets. Sealing these leaky areas can prevent air loss and save money on energy bills. The DOE estimates between 5% and 30% of your energy costs are lost due to drafts.

Changing conventional incandescent lightbulbs to LED lighting can also help minimize energy bills. One of the forgotten consequences of using incandescent bulbs is the heat given off. Most incandescent bulbs use up to 5%, with some using only 2%, of the energy for light; the rest of the energy is transformed into heat. For a simple example, with a 100-Watt lightbulb, 95% or more of the energy used to light an incandescent bulb creates heat, while 5% or less is used to light the filaments in the bulb. Incandescent bulbs also have an average life span of 1,000 hours, one of the reason people need to replace them on a regular basis. The brightness of lightbulbs is measured in lumens. A 100-Watt lightbulb produces approximately 1,600 lumens. LED lighting, on the other hand, gives off minimal heat due to consuming less energy and is more efficient. LEDs also use about 10% of the energy of an incandescent bulb for the equivalent amount of lumens. Another important aspect to remember concerning LED lightbulbs is the longevity of them, with an average life expectancy of over 22,000 hours, or 22 times the longevity of an incandescent bulb. The LED bulb comparable to the 100-Watt incandescent bulb, or a 1,600 lumen bulb, would take approximately 10-Watts, or 1/10 the energy to produce the same amount of light.

ENERGYSTAR is a national program from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Department of Energy (DOE). The program includes a system that rates furnaces, water heaters, major appliances, and electronics such as televisions and computers based on energy savings and carbon emissions. ENERGYSTAR'S website (www.energystar.gov) includes the ratings as well as suggestions for energy efficient home improvements and buying an energy efficient new home.

Under the Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018, which was signed in February 2018, a number of tax credits for residential energy efficiency that had expired at the end of 2016 were renewed. Tax credits for non-

business energy property are now available retroactive to purchases made through December 31, 2017. Tax credits for all residential renewable energy products are extended through December 31, 2021 and they feature a gradual step down in the credit value.

Products eligible for the tax credits that have earned the ENERGYSTAR are independently certified to save energy, save money, and protect the environment. Use up to 30% less energy in your home by outfitting with ENERGYSTAR certified products, available across more than 70 categories.¹

¹ ***Disclaimer:** *The tax credit information contained within this website is provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to substitute for expert advice from a professional tax/financial planner or the Internal Revenue Service (IRS).*