

Tales from the Crawlspace

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Propertyexam

Energy Conservation vs. Energy Efficiency

To continue...

Energy Conservation is behavioral. It's all about how we do things, or rather how to make the most out of what you have. These can be the easiest or the hardest changes to make. They can also make the greatest difference in every homeowner's energy costs. It's great to have a new 95% furnace, but the cost of replacement eats up a lot of the energy savings. Simple changes in how you operate your home can pay huge dividends, but require commitment and discipline. A 10 year old, 80% furnace can use up to 40% or less fuel from the simple and proper use of an inexpensive, (say \$50) programmable thermostat. Setting the temperature at 50 degree Ferenheight., at 9 or so and setting it to come back up to 65 degree Ferinheight an hour or so before you get up. Most people sleep better if it's cooler anyway. It's so much more comfortable snuggled under the covers. If you're away from the house during the day, let it go back down during the time you're away. You won't save as much during the daytime as it's warmer outside, but it all adds up. Most programmable thermostats are not actually programmed. I inspect hundreds of houses a year and less than a score of them are really set up. A half hour with the manufacturer's instructions (usually available online for those who have lost them) is a small commitment to substantial conservation. Tankless water heaters save a TON, but a new installed unit can cost \$2,000 or more. A timer can be installed on your water heater (units cost about \$50 for electric \$110 for gas) that can reduce your energy waste, heating water that isn't used. This is actually a bigger commitment than you might think, particularly in homes with several people. The most substantial savings would be if you let the hot water go off at bedtime and back on late afternoon (when you'd be away). That would me no hot water in the morning. The problem this makes is that if you ramp up hot water a couple times a day, the

additional energy used to heat cool water up cuts into the savings. If, this is done too many times, it won't be worth it overall. Using a local space heater to heat one area while allowing most of the house to be cooler can make a significant difference. Keeping windows and doors closed and latched (for a better seal) will help. Becoming more like your father and keeping lights off in empty rooms, cuts electric use.

"Phantom", "vampire" load or base load on electric use is a killer; it's the constant drain of power, whether you are there or have anything really in use at all. An extra refrigerator in the garage is cool, but it's the biggest waster of electricity there is in most homes. A refrigerator or freezer is a compressor motor that runs constantly. Let 7-11 keep your extra beer cold. Most of all the solid state electronics you get now doesn't ever actually shut off. It stays in a "stand by" mode so that when you press the on button on your remote, it comes on fast. Shutting this stuff completely off can reduce unused energy use. You can put them on a timer, or even a power strip that you turn off when you go to bed.

All this stuff matters, it all adds up. In the end, a combination of Energy efficiency and conservation is what will really make the difference. You can't just buy better stuff. You can't just do without (at least most of us can't). By making a plan to do what you can, about the things you can change, really can make a difference. When it comes to conservation, it's hard to change our ways. However, how can we not? Using less, is the one thing we can all do, there is really no excuse and it's something we owe ourselves, our children and everyone else.