

(CBS/The Early Show)

(CBS) If you're feeling a chill in the air, it's a good time to think about winterizing your home to reduce your heating bills.

Danny Lipford, host of "Today's Home Owner," has five cash-saving tips for viewers of *The Early Show* that he says can really add up.

Lipford says inspecting insulation, sealing gaps, and maximizing the heating and hot water systems all will save money.

According to the Dept. of Energy, the cost to heat an average home is approximately \$1,400. Lipford says you can save close to 50 percent of that, if your home is winterized the right way.

Lipford uses a total home approach and looks at various areas where heat may escape or not be used efficiently. Whether you live in one of the coldest areas of the country or in a milder climate, any or all of the following steps will help reduce heating bills.

Inspect Your Insulation

Since warm air rises, the single most effective way to save on heating is to have adequate attic insulation. If you don't know how to tell, look for your ceiling joists. If you can see them, you need more insulation.

Lipford uses the new "Miraflex Insulation" for homes. It is the first new glass-fiber insulation to be developed in nearly 60 years. Traditional insulation, known for being scratchy and irritating to the skin, costs approximately 25 cents per square foot. Miraflex is about twice as much, but Lipford estimates the yearly savings from using it could be as much as \$150 to \$200.

Plug the Gaps Outside

The next step in keeping your house cozy is to keep cold air out. To do this, you must seal up all cracks on the exterior perimeter of the home. Areas around windows and outdoor faucets can let in a tremendous amount of cold air. Use standard caulking or new Sidewinder Caulk that is appropriate for use in temperatures below 40 degrees. Simply inspect the exterior of the home and apply the caulk wherever you see any cracks, gaps or holes.

The estimated cost of caulk is about \$10 per tube. Lipford estimates the yearly saving from caulking at \$80 to \$100.

Stop the Leaks Inside

Now, it's time to seal up the inside of the home. Cracks around windows, on perimeter walls and around electrical outlets on exterior walls can create a tremendous leak of warm air. Again, simply use a standard caulking gun, apply caulk to any areas where you can see a crack or gap or feel a draft. This will provide a more airtight envelope around the home.

Once you have sealed up the cracks, turn your attention to drafty, inefficient windows. If new windows are not in your budget, use a window insulation kit like the one that is available from Duck brand. This kit is very easy to install and costs about \$3 per window.

The estimated cost of caulk is about \$10 per tube. The window insulation kit costs \$15, and each kit can cover 3-5 windows. The estimated yearly saving is \$60 to \$80.

Maximize Your Heating System

There are many ways you can maximize the efficiency of your current heating system. For safety reasons, have a professional inspect your heating system every year to ensure that it is operating properly. Having ducts cleaned and filters changed will immediately produce results in the amount of heat produced.

Another way to save money is by using a setback thermostat. This allows you to heat your home when you are there and let the temperature drop a little when you are out. It is much less expensive to heat the home back up than it is to keep it at the same temperature all day long.

Another trend in heating is “zone heating.” By using devices that heat the area of the home where you spend the most time rather than heating the entire house, you can save additional dollars. Lipford demonstrated on *The Early Show* the Setback Thermostat, a computerized setback thermostat and the [Reiker Room Conditioner](#), a ceiling fan that emits heat.

The Setback Thermostat costs \$80, while the Reiker Room Conditioner costs \$499. Lipford estimates the yearly savings to be \$175 to \$225.

Keep your Hot Water Hot

On an average, it takes 14 percent of your overall utility bill to provide hot water. Savings can be realized by wrapping a water heater blanket around your water heater, insulating your water pipes and considering the installation of a timer on all electric water heaters.

Lipford estimates the hot water heater blanket to cost \$15; the hot water pipe wraps to cost \$20; and the electric water heater timer to cost \$60. The estimated yearly saving is \$30 to \$40.
