



Winter's coming!

Winterize your home and go green at the same time

Submitted by Coldwell Banker Gundaker

The rising interest in eco-friendly living has homeowners paying a premium to turn their property a shade of green. The good news is that these adjustments to get your home running more efficiently before winter's long nights and cold temperatures can put some green back into your pocket-book, as well as enhance the perception of your home in the long run.

"Earth-friendly products and techniques that reduce the cost of maintaining a home are strong selling points for homebuyers today," said Jim Dohr, president of Coldwell Banker Gundaker. "Displaying home improvements that reduce energy expenses can set you apart from the competition, not to mention the immediate benefits for your family's budget."

Here are some simple solutions to reduce energy consumption:

- Don't let warmth slip through the cracks. Homeowners can save significant amounts on utilities by installing insulation, sealing cracks and tightening windows. Some home sources estimate that heat loss through windows can account for up to 35 percent of your heating bill.

- Lighten your energy load. Replacing incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs lowers your energy bill and cuts down on trips to the store. Programmable thermostats also

make it easier to conserve. Families can shave five percent off energy bills for every degree a thermostat is lowered below 70 in the winter.

- Wrap it up. Hot water pipes lose heat when they pass through unheated areas. Insulating your pipes can keep temperatures consistent for energy efficiency. Pre-formed pipe insulation sleeves offer a simple solution.

It's also a good time to winterize the outside of your home.

Here are three ways to prep your home for winter:

- Those breezy tree-lined streets soon create the rustling leaves of fall, which can clog gutters and clutter your walkways and patios. Keep walking areas swept and collect lawn debris well before first snowfall. Leaf guards keep gutters empty and easier to maintain.

- Warm it up. Check working fireplaces for loose mortar and debris before setting the first fires of winter. Have heating systems inspected and stock up on filters for regular changes throughout the season.

- Seal your driveway. The winter months with their snow, ice and salt do the most damage to driveways. Protect yours by caring for any cracks and holes before the freeze sets in. Also check for drafty doors or windows that allow heat to escape. Replace seals where needed.