

# Address air leaks to save energy and money

Rising energy costs coupled with the continued adoption of eco-friendly lifestyles are two factors driving homeowners to seek ways to reduce energy consumption in their homes. Reducing energy consumption is reason enough for many homeowners to make changes around the house, but saving energy sometimes means saving substantial amounts of money as well.

Energy-efficient appliances and eco-friendly building materials can help homeowners reduce energy consumption. But homeowners looking for additional ways to cut cooling and heating costs can address air leaks around the house to make their homes more energy efficient.

- Identify air leaks around windows and doorways. Autumn is a great time of year to identify air leaks. Fall, and particularly late fall, tends to be characterized by cold air that makes it easy to detect air leaks. Feel for leaks around windows and doorways, ideally conducting such tests on cold, windy days when you can quickly detect if air is flowing in from the outside. Leaks around windows and doors waste energy because the interior of the home is either colder (in the winter) or warmer (in the summer) than it needs to be, prompting homeowners to turn up their thermostats or rely more heavily on air conditioning units.

- Look for leaks elsewhere around the house. While windows and doorways are where many leaks are found, leaks also may be found around plumbing, electrical fixtures and

dryer vents. Inspect such areas by feeling for drafts or looking for signs that insects and critters might be entering.

- Look up and down. Evidence of air leaks may be noticeable on both the floor and the ceiling. Dirty spots on carpeting and the ceiling may be indicative of air leaks at interior wall/ceiling joints and wall/floor joists. Fixing such leaks may be as simple as applying some caulk.

- Go with gaskets. The United States Department of Energy recommends installing foam gaskets behind outlet and switch plates on walls. Outlets and switch boxes on exterior walls provide another place for air to leak into a home and drive up energy costs. Properly installed gaskets can cut back on air infiltration, providing an inexpensive way to save energy and money.

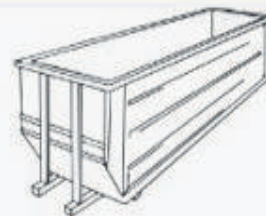
- Cover the kitchen exhaust fans when you are not cooking. Kitchen exhaust fans can help prevent fires and unfavorable indoor air conditions when preparing meals at home. But such fans provide opportunities for air to enter a home, so make sure they are tightly closed or covered when no one is cooking in the kitchen.

Air leaks around a house can waste energy and contribute to high energy bills, particularly during the winter and summer when temperatures outside tend to be at their most extreme. Homeowners looking to reduce their energy consumption and save money can inspect various areas of their homes for air leaks and immediately address any they discover.



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