

Efficiency Vermont's tips for springtime energy savings

Courtesy Efficiency Vermont

If the end of another Vermont winter makes you want to air the house and do a good spring cleaning, here are some great ways to get double duty out of all that effort.

Make the following tips part of your annual spring cleaning list, and you'll have not only a cleaner home, you'll also get better performance from your lights, appliances, exhaust fans and air conditioners while lowering your energy bills.

Get more light: Clean dirt, dust and bugs from light fixtures, globes, bulbs and shades.

Dry clothes faster: Clear lint from your clothes-dryer exhaust hose. A coated or clogged hose can increase significantly the amount of time and energy your dryer uses. Have a flexible hose? Replace it with smooth metal ducting to improve air flow, dry clothes faster and reduce drying energy use. You also won't need to clean a smooth, metal hose as often.

Don't make your fridge work so hard: Clean dust from under your refrigerator, the front vent at the base and any exposed coils at the back. Another tip: Make sure products aren't blocking the fan vents inside the fridge and freezer.

Clear the air: Dust bathroom ceiling fan covers and fan blades. Clean dust and grease from the kitchen stove hood and exhaust fan.

Dusting off your pride and joy? While you're dusting your TV, computer, gaming equipment and other home electronics, take a look at how they're plugged in. You can stop overpaying to power these big energy users (many draw electricity even when off) by plugging them into an advanced power strip, which automatically cuts electricity to any idle equipment you choose.

Step outside and take a look at any accessible exterior vents, such as for the clothes dryer, central-heating system, water heater, kitchen-fan exhaust or bath-fan exhaust. Clear them of any blockage or buildup of dust, webs, leaves and lint. You might even find a bird's or insect's nest that needs to be moved.

Do you have mildew on bathroom ceilings? This is a sign of insufficient ventilation. If you have a bath fan, use it. If you need a fan, look for an Energy Star-qualified model. These fans are quiet, use little electricity and can mean you won't have moldy bathroom ceilings to clean next spring. Be sure to vent bath fans to the outdoors, or you'll risk moving your mildew problem to another area of the house or attic.

Prepare for summer: Clean the back of window air conditioners, dust central-air-system intakes and vents and keep them clear of obstructions, and see that central-air filters are clean. Planning to use a bug light? Make it a compact fluorescent bulb.

Make a clean slate for next winter: While your memory of winter is fresh, now is a great time to make note of cold-weather problems and



Gannett file photo

Making sure windows are properly caulked and cleaned can help you save on energy bills.

About Efficiency Vermont

Efficiency Vermont was created by the Vermont Legislature and the Vermont Public Service Board to help Vermonters reduce energy costs, strengthen the economy and protect Vermont's environment. Efficiency Vermont is operated by the Vermont Energy Investment Corporation (VEIC), an independent organization under contract to the Public Service Board. VEIC is a Vermont-based nonprofit founded in 1986. For more information, contact Efficiency Vermont at 888-921-5990 or www.encyvermont.com.

plan summer fix-it projects that will reduce your energy costs next winter:

■ **Did your windows rattle?** Were they drafty? Caulk any gaps around window frames. Do the same around exterior door frames. Replace broken panes and any cracked or missing glazing. See that window sashes lock properly. If you don't have storm windows, have them made for next winter.

■ **Were your window fogged up?** Were sills wet, moldy or rotting? These may be signs of poorly performing windows and/or excess moisture and insufficient ventilation. To address sources of excess moisture: Repair any plumbing leaks; do any air drying of laundry outdoors; don't bring unseasoned firewood into the house; see that bath fans and clothes dryers are vented to the outdoors; when possible, vent kitchen hoods to the outdoors. To provide sufficient ventilation: Use bath fans after bathing, and use kitchen hood exhaust while cooking. For useful information on bath fans,

see the previous tip about mildew on bathroom ceilings.

■ **Did your pipes freeze?** Your pipes are in a space that isn't properly sealed and/or insulated. Speak with a Home Performance with Energy Star contractor about sealing gaps and installing insulation. To find a Vermont contractor, see the end of this list.

■ **Did you use heat tape** to prevent frozen pipes? It makes more financial sense to stop air leaks (see previous tip) than to pay year after year for the electricity that powers heat tape. Until you can have air sealing/insulation installed, try this: Unplug heat tape after freezing weather has passed in the spring, even if the tape is controlled by a thermostat. Thermostat-controlled heat tape can turn on at air temperatures as high as 38 degrees and can stay on when the air is as warm as 50 degrees. Inspect the tape. See that it's tightly wrapped. Eliminate fire hazards by removing any pipe insulation that's on top of tape and replacing any worn tape.

■ **Did you see ice dams or icicles** on your house? A likely cause is heat escaping through gaps in the attic floor or roof. A contractor can do a thorough job of sealing those gaps and seeing that you have sufficient, well-installed insulation.

■ **Was the house drafty?** You have air leaks. These can occur in likely spots — such as the attic floor and basement walls — and in numerous places throughout the house, such as around plumbing, wiring, recessed lighting, at soffits, attic hatches and more. A Home Performance with Energy Star contractor is specially trained to find and fix the causes of drafts and high energy bills by doing a comprehensive, whole-house assessment.

Find a contractor: Visit www.encyvermont.com/homeperformance.

Gather more information: Visit Efficiency Vermont online at encyvermont.com.



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