

Five signs you need to insulate your home this winter

(StatePoint) The average family spends more than \$1000 annually -- nearly half a home's total energy bill -- on heating and cooling costs, according to the U.S. government's Energy Star program. Unfortunately, a large portion of those expenses are wasted due to poor home insulation.

Homeowners prepping for winter can stop the energy waste cycle by taking a closer look at their insulation. As one of the fastest and most cost-efficient ways to reduce energy waste and lower bills, insulation traps warm air inside a home's walls -- similar to how a fleece sweater does for the body -- to regulate a home's temperature. But how do you know if your home is properly insulated?

"Fortunately, there are telltale signs that can alert

any homeowner that it's time to add to or replace their home's insulation -- before the temperature plunges and the energy bill rises," says Mike Benetti, segment manager at Roxul, a leading manufacturer of stone wool insulation.

The experts at Roxul advise any homeowner with a do-it-yourself mentality to run through the following checklist to determine whether their home has adequate insulation:

- **Vintage home:** Prior to consistent building codes, most homes built before 1980 were not insulated. If your home has no materials trapping heat, energy conservation is an uphill battle. Walls, ceilings and floors are the most important areas to add insulation for an immediate, positive impact on a home's energy usage and bills.

- **Non-stop furnace:**

Does your furnace seem to run non-stop in the winter? Adequate insulation leads to less maintenance on your heating system, as it lasts longer, runs less and will require less maintenance for long-term cost savings.

- **Temperature inconsistency:** If you feel cold spots coming from the walls or attic, or one room of your home is drafty and another one warm, you may need to beef up your insulation. The fireplace, walls and attic are prime spots for drafts. Look for insulation that can fit snugly in rafters and other tight areas. For example, Roxul ComfortBatt insulation made from recycled stone, can be cut with a serrated blade for an exact fit.

- **Roof hot spots:** If your shingles are exposed after a recent snowfall, chances

are these "hot spots" are indicative of warm air escaping. Check your attic for adequate insulation. If you can easily see your floor joists, you should add more. Use insulation, such as stone wool, that won't sag or lose density over time.

- **Mold Growth:** Mold in the corners of ceilings could mean your current insulation slumps and holds moisture. If this occurs, it's time to replace your insulation with one that does not store or transfer moisture and is completely resistant to mold, mildew, rot and bacterial growth, such as Roxul ComfortBatt.

Don't let cool weather take you by surprise. With proper insulation, you can improve the comfort of your home significantly and enjoy energy savings.



Smart home improvements can save you money

(StatePoint) During fall, many homeowners focus on small upgrades and improvements. The turning season is the perfect time to find and correct potential compromises in your home before they become larger, and more costly, renovation issues.

"Whether it is routine home exterior checks or appliances purchases, there are many ways homeowners can conduct basic, inexpensive home maintenance," said Harold "Bud" Dietrich, member of the American Institute of Architects Custom Residential Architecture Network.

DIY Home Inspection

Many people don't know that they should perform twice-a-year home inspections. The prime time for these inspections is in the

spring and fall. Take the time to give your house a thorough review.

Start by walking the perimeter of your property to see if there is any rotting wood, mold, loose gutters or shingles. Then check for any cracks that have settled or work that could be done to siding, roofing or windows.

Inspect the bathroom and kitchen for loose or missing tiles and leaks in sinks and faucets. Ensure that appliances are working at maximum capacity.

Although these may not seem like major issues, it is much easier to tackle them during milder seasons so potential problems aren't made worse by extreme weather.

Exterior Updates

Many people underestimate the seriousness of dirt and mulch covering the sid-

ing of a home. Most building codes actually require at least six inches of the foundation to be exposed.

Beyond breaking these codes, dirt and mulch buildup pulls moisture from the ground and causes it to develop in the walls. Eventually mold will start to grow, which can lead to a variety of indoor air quality and structural problems. Raking around the foundation of your home regularly can

help combat this problem.

Another area to consider for easy updates is exterior paint. Peeling paint isn't only unattractive; it also exposes the siding of your home to the elements. Regular maintenance of areas that need re-painting can save major headaches down the line.

Updating Appliances

Buying new appliances

can be an investment, and, as such, paying a higher price upfront can actually save you money in the long run. The right appliances can last for twenty years or more, while more inexpensive models often break down after a few years. Newer models are also often more energy efficient. If cost or budget is an issue, store displays are often offered at extremely discounted prices.

Also make an investment in flooring and countertops. Buying laminate countertops will initially be cheaper than granite countertops, but in ten years the granite countertops will still look brand new, while the laminate will be worn out and need to be replaced.

An architect can help homeowners apply many of these cost-saving home improvements in smart and strategic ways.



Miller's

Tree & Bucket Truck Service

Trimming • Topping • Removal
Insured for Your Peace of Mind

Kenneth Miller
Port Royal, PA 17082

FREE ESTIMATES

(717) 527-4405

ALDEN GISEWHITE PA Home Imp. #018041
Cell 717.363.4478



5 and 6 Inch Gutters



PO Box 224
Lewistown, PA 17044