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ELECTRIC, GAS, WATER AND
SANITARY SEWER SERVICES

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Button Up Your Home For Winter

Winter, and its significantly colder temperatures has arrived. Is your home prepared to be as energy efficient as it can be? There are many considerations and steps to take to help your residence "weather" the upcoming winter months.

Based upon national averages, a home's energy usage is comprised of the following percentages: Heating & Cooling 32%, Lighting 10%, TV's and related 7%, Water Heating 14%, Refrigerator 7%, and Electric Appliances (Clothes Dryer, Dishwasher, Microwaves) 17%. Therefore, addressing issues in the areas that have the most energy usage will help residents to control their energy usage and also the amount of their monthly utility bills.

View your residence as an energy system with interdependent parts. For example, your heating system is not just a furnace, it's a heat delivery network that starts at the furnace and delivers heat throughout your home using a network of ducts. A top-of-the-line, energy efficient furnace is great, but if the ducts carrying the heated air leak and your walls, attic, windows and doors are not well insulated and energy efficient, energy bills may remain high. Take a whole-house approach when trying to save energy and lower bills. Efficiency improvements not only make the home more comfortable, they can yield long-term financial rewards.

What are some steps to take in order to help control energy usage? Some are fairly simple. Start by using energy saving settings on refrigerators, dishwashers, washing machines and clothes dryers. Turn down the temperature of your water heater to the warm setting (120 degrees F). Clean or replace furnace, air conditioner, and heat pump filters.

Seal up the largest air leaks in your home. Check around windows and doors on windy days. Installing caulking, weatherstripping or a bottom door sash may prevent the loss of air that you have already paid to heat. Don't forget to check utility cut-throughs for pipes or wiring that enter the home from the outside. Gaps around chimneys and recessed lighting in insulated ceilings should also be checked.

Check your home's level of insulation in the attic or any crawlspaces. Insulation helps control energy usage year around, not just when it's cold outside. The Department of Energy recommends an R-value of at least 38 (R38) in an existing insulated attic for homes in Nebraska.

While checking any crawlspaces, help prevent water line freeze-ups. When lines freeze and then rupture, extremely expensive damages can result. Water lines beneath a home, near cracks in foundations and in uninsulated walls are the most susceptible to freezing. If a water line is in an uninsulated wall, insulate both the wall and the water line. Wrapping pipes with insulation in other areas will also help. Heat tapes may be necessary, particularly in unheated crawlspaces. Repair any foundation cracks with mortar, insulation or both.

For even more ideas on trimming your home's energy usage, stop by the main business office lobby at the Utility Department (1228 N Denver). A free guide "Energy Savers, Tips On Saving Energy & Money At Home" is available to customers daily during regular business hours.



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