

Winterize your home against mother nature

By Doris A. Black

Most of us have accepted the fact that it's expensive to heat a home in the winter and keep it cool in the summer. With the price of natural resources soaring each year, we may feel that there is nothing we can do, but that's not entirely true. There are lots of ways to make heating or cooling our homes less expensive.

First, let's talk about insulation. When properly placed, insulation can halt or slow the transfer of heat. Newer homes are often built with modern energy-saving techniques, but additional insulation installed in older homes can save the homeowner thousands of dollars in utilities over just a few years.

Are some rooms in your house cooler than others during the winter? Do your feet get particularly cold when you're in a room located over a crawl space? Insulation can help. Experts say all open cavities of walls, floors and ceilings adjacent to living spaces should be insulated. Insulation not only reduces your utility bills by saving energy, but it also makes your house more comfortable by helping maintain an even temperature. It also increases the resale value of your home while reducing external noise by acting as a buffer. Additionally, properly installed insulation can reduce the growth of molds and mildew that can cause serious health problems.

Insulation is manufactured from all different types of materials. Most common are fiberglass, polyester and wood, but there is also plastic from recycled milk cartons and straw. Each is regulated and rated by R-values. The higher the R-value, the better the insulating properties. Generally speaking, in the Midwest the roof should be insulated with R-values between R-40 and R-50, walls above grade between R-20 and R-30, and basement walls with R-10. In most homes, the highest heat loss occurs through the attic. Attic insulation should have a minimum value of R-40. Install a vapor barrier between the insulation and ceiling to restrict moisture.

Several factors can determine how much insulation your home needs – the climate where you reside, the structure of your home and the type of furnace or air conditioning unit you use. You might consider getting an energy audit of your home to de-

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As you look around for the best deal on heating oil this winter, consider this. The day – or more likely the night – will come when you need service. That's not the time you want to search the yellow pages, and wait in the cold for a service company. And it's not a call you want to make to East Providence, Fall River, or New Bedford.

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