

Top 3 Places Homes Lose Energy (plus One More)

By: John Smith

To get the most out of your home and money, it's a good idea to take charge of your home and seal up those voids to make your house more efficient. The following are some typical energy inefficient spaces in houses.

1. The Attic

We all know that hot air rises and this principle is the reason hot air balloons can float, for example. Well, the same thing happens in our homes. Air comes in through the lower levels, warms up and moves up through the house. The final destination of the warmed air is the attic, where air can vent back outside.

If your attic is not properly insulated, air can come and go as it pleases and that air can also re-enter your home. What this means is that your heating and air conditioning will be working overtime to keep up with the air coming into and out of your home. This translates directly into dollars coming out of your wallet and to the electric, oil and gas companies. Why give them money if you don't have to?

Instead, you can be sure to have the correct R-rated insulation in your attic and the right amount of insulation, depending on what area of the country you live in. Air sealing any openings and crevices dramatically helps air loss. Radiant barriers are a great way to reduce heat gain in the summer and reduce heat loss in the winter. It saves you money on heating and cooling and your home will feel more comfortable. It's a win-win situation.

Professional home energy auditors are the best people to do this because they are up on all the latest information regarding home energy strategies and practices. Plus, they are experts at air sealing houses and can bring their experience into your home to make sure it's done properly to avoid future issues in the home.

2. The Basement or Crawl Space

We all know that basements and crawlspaces are usually cold, damp places. It's because they have concrete on all sides and are in direct contact with the ground. Rainwater comes down from the sky and into the ground. The ground absorbs the water and holds it. The moisture and humidity from the earth constantly press on the basement foundation or crawl space, making the basement or crawl space a humid and cold environment. While this used to be good to use for root cellars when our country was based on farming, these days less basements are used for food and more for living space. A cold, damp basement just isn't an inviting atmosphere you want to hang out in.

Tons of outside air infiltrates through basements and crawl spaces. Sealing air leaks in the basement and proper insulation are key to saving energy.

Once you have the attic and basement or crawl space air sealed and insulated, you will save a lot on heating and cooling costs. The mid-section of your home may then be more comfortable without even doing a thing to that portion of the house!

3. Windows

While it's not always the windows that are the biggest energy-stealing culprit, they may make a big difference depending on your home. A lot of times it's the gap around the window that needs to be air sealed, rather than the windows themselves. In any case, thirty year old window technology is an antique by today's standards. Sealing windows with plastic will help fend off cold air a little bit but it won't fix the problem and there will still be air flowing in and out of the home. Instead, installing replacement windows with proper sealing around the frame gives you energy efficient windows that aren't drafty and keep air inside your home, where it belongs. You can replace all the windows or just a few of them. Either tactic helps save you money and energy. Of course if money was no object, replacing them all would be the route to go, but sometimes we have to live within our budgets, too. One thing is for sure, if it makes sense in your home, replacement windows are worth the investment in the money they will save you over the life of the windows while you are in your home.

4. Efficient lighting

During the latest environmentally friendly trend, compact fluorescent efficient lighting and incandescent light bulbs have been talked about ad nauseum, but there's a reason. It's one of the easiest and fastest ways to save money and energy. So if you haven't switched out all your light bulbs in your lamps, track lighting, bathroom fixtures and outdoor lamp posts to CFLs or even LEDs, then you're missing out on savings. By changing the type of light bulbs you use in your home, you will see immediate savings on energy bills.

Another bonus to energy efficient light bulbs is that they last much, much longer than traditional bulbs. Even though the initial cost may be more, they are worth it because you won't have to change that bulb for a long time. Who couldn't use one less thing to think about? Don't like the color of the CFLs, you say? Just pick the right color temperature, which is rated in degrees Kelvin (K). Look for a CFL with a 2700K rating and this will give you the color range you're accustomed to.

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