Lower Heat Settings Save Big Dollars

The heat-saving techniques have gotten quite familiar by now, but the figures may surprise you. Last week's cool nights

put Clayton E. Gentry, district manager in Elizabeth City for Virginia Electric and Power Company, to work educating the public.

A vital instrument in cutting fuel cost is your thermostat. Using 70 degrees as a base, you can save 8 per cent of your fuel cost by lowering its permanent setting by two, degrees. Or you can raise the cost 8 per cent by advancing it two degrees.

Drop the permanent setting to 66 degrees, and you'll save 16 per cent. Raising it to 74 will have the reverse effect.

These are the key variations in thermostat setting. Gentry underscored the word "permanent" in describing the settings.

A thermostat must be located away from heatproducing sources and out of cold drafts to be effective. Gentry said. The permanency of the setting is not absolute, he said.

If you're going to be away from home for several days, drop the thermostat setting. but never below 50 degrees. A cold snap can freeze your pipes and you'll be hit with a plumber's bill far more costly than the fuel you might have saved.

More figures that might surprise you:

'The conventional fireplace is only about 15 per cent effective even when it is well-designed and constructed."

"Wood stoves may achieve an efficiency of approximately 50 per cent."

Both can be made more cost-effective. But when calculating savings, remember to add the cost of the wood unless you have your own supply. Unless you have an existing, working chimney, do not forget the cost of installing a venting system. This could involve cutting holes through walls or the roof.

To make a fireplace more efficient, make certain a damper exists and works properly. Install a fire screen of clear safety glass. If at all feasible, install a vent to bring combustion air to your firebox from the outside. If this is not feasible, close off the room containing the fireplace.

It is not too late to make your home more heatefficient, Gentry said. Here is what you can do:

Check those crawl space and attic vents. Close some, but not all, of the underside vents. Some ventilation is needed to keep moisture down. Remember to open the vents in the spring. Keep those attic vents open or you may have moisture condensation and damage.

Clear your radiators, registers or other heatsupplying sources of drapes, rugs or furniture.

If you have a ducted hot air system, replace or clean the air filters as necessary. Generally, three cleanings are necessary during a heating season. Dirty air filters cause your heating unit to work longer and harder.

Check those warm air ducts for leaks. Duct work in unheated areas should be insulated properly with a minimum of 11/2 inches of insulation (R-4).

If you have a heat pump, make sure your outdoor unit is free of leaves, debris or anything that may block the flow of air across the coils.

Use the sun as much as possible. Remove any awnings or overhangs that will block the sun from your windows. Keep the draperies and shades open by day and drawn by night. Here is where you may

need help: Get that heating system in top condition, because you may need to call on it on very short notice. Clean the flues, check and adjust the belts, lubricate the motors and pumps and adjust the combustion units.







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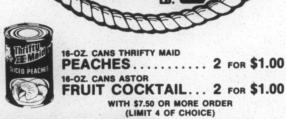
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