

HOMESENSE

Easy Ways To
Support Our
Troops 
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Smart and simple ways to enrich your home living.

Fall 2003

\$3.00

MONEY WISE

Keep Home Heating Bills from Getting Out of Hand

Winter heating bills can take a chunk of change out of your monthly budget. But that certainly doesn't mean you'd want to turn your furnace off and live "heat-free" through the coldest months of the year.

There are many steps we can take to limit our energy use *and* stay comfortable.

Check your heating system before you need it. A pre-season tune-up is the best way to make sure your system is running strong when the coldest days hit. Dirt, dust and other contaminants have been building up since you turned your system off last year. Before you crank it up again, have your system tuned up and cleaned thoroughly.

Perform a home energy audit. What are the problem areas in your home? Leaks, drafts, faulty equipment? A home energy audit can help you pinpoint problems and provide solutions.

Adjust your thermostat. This is a no-brainer, of course. A programmable thermostat will do this for you automatically. It will lower the thermostat at night while you sleep, then raise the heat when you get up. It can also lower the heat during your work day, and raise it when it's time for you to come home.

Change filters regularly. Changing your filter once a month will increase the efficiency of your heating system. Dirty filters reduce airflow which forces

the system to work harder.

Seal leaks. Look for obvious places where warm air could escape. Check seals around windows and doors. Also check around pipes, electrical outlets, ceiling fixtures and attic stairs. Caulking and weatherstripping will reduce drafts and can save you as much as 10% on your energy use. While you're at it, close up crawl spaces too. That will prevent cold drafts from blowing under the house.

Insulate adequately. Improving your insulation improves your ability to keep the heat indoors. A poorly insulated home wastes so much energy that almost anything you do yields an immediate pay-off. Check for adequate insulation in walls, ceilings, basements and attics. Insulate your water heater too.

Add sunshine during the day. Yet another simple tip. Keeping blinds and curtains open during the day raises the temperature of the house. Closing the blinds and curtains at night helps keep the heat in.

Look into a replacement system. If your heating system is an older, inefficient model, the replacement cost of a new system may soon pay for itself with your energy savings.

Call us for more information about all these energy-saving ideas, including the home energy audit. And don't forget to schedule your tune-up before the busy season hits.

MY WORD

Is It Fall Already?

By Glenn Pack

Hello Friends,



Is it Fall? There's a rumor going around that we had summer already, but I don't know. Seems the seasons are getting *much closer* together! (That couldn't be because I'm getting older. No way.)

Schools are starting earlier. The "Back to School" sales seem to start in mid-June. Football practice starts in July. August used to be the "last" month of summer, but has now become September's doormat. And soon enough, we'll see Santa displays... about 90 minutes after the Halloween stuff is put away! Whew.

Funny thing is, **I don't think anyone told Mother Nature.** I'm pretty sure the seasons are the same, the rest of this stuff must be a convenience to *someone*. (Soon as I figure out who, I'll let you know!)

We're sensitive about seasons around here because that's what we do. We try to "de-season" (yes, I just made that word up) your indoor weather. Our job is to make your home's *indoor comfort* the same, regardless of the weather outside.

So your heating system (that's been sleeping since the last spring cold snap) is soon to be aroused into service. The power it takes to wake him up will be surging through in an effort to produce warmth in every inch of your home. That's a big job, especially...

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INSIDE...

- Fall Checklist
- How To Keep Repair Bills Down
- Avoid Auto Repair Scams

HomeSense is published for friends of
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Your Quik Call Comfort Hotline:
203-847-8781



Chore Checklist for Fall

Fall is a great time for tending to household chores. The summer heat has subsided, and the weather is cool and comfortable. Start by checking the following areas:

- ❑ **Garden:** This is just the right season for planting perennials, trees and shrubs. Prune non-flowering shrubs, and trim back tree limbs near your roof. When frost is in the forecast, bring houseplants inside. Also, look for end-of-season sales on gardening equipment.
- ❑ **Winter preparation:** Cold weather is coming, so get ready. Give your heating system a pre-season tune-up. Also, check caulking and weatherstripping around doors and exterior windows. Clean out gutters and downspouts, and make sure outside water pipes are drained and protected from freezing. Check automobile tires, brakes and antifreeze.
- ❑ **Garage:** Make a clean sweep of the place. Remove everything and sweep the floor. Before you put it back in, make sure you really need it. Get rid of unused items and organize tools, outdoor gear and yard equipment. Also, remove anything that's likely to freeze, such as paint.
- ❑ **Tax tips:** Taxes can be the biggest chore of all. With the end of the year just around the corner, you've only got a little while longer to take advantage of available opportunities. If you're self-employed, set up a tax-deferred retirement plan. Or if you participate in a 401(k), fund it to the maximum allowed. And don't forget about your Flexible Spending Account, if you have one. Set up your medical appointments to make sure you use your remaining funds.

HOME WISE

Water Leaks Can Mean Big Repair Bills

■ Act quickly to keep costs down

Water leaks aren't something to take a "wait and see" attitude about. When a leak occurs, the faster you act, the better off you'll be.

The first step of any fast action, of course, is preparation. Prepare for a leak before it happens. While a flood is raging through your kitchen is no time to ask, "How do you cut off the water?" Know in advance where your water cut-offs are located, both inside and outside your home.

Remember, water cut-offs, especially the main ones, aren't always easy to turn. You may need tools to assist you, so make sure you have the right kind on hand. Take a trial run at turning your water off in each location.

Once a leak occurs:

The first thing to do is to turn off the water to the supply line that feeds the leaking pipe or fixture. There's usually a shut-off valve directly beneath the sink or next to the toilet. If the leaking point is hidden or if there is no valve nearby, you'll have to shut off water to the entire house.

Don't forget your common sense while you're rushing around. Water

and electricity do not mix. Never have, never will. If the leak is large enough, the water flow could reach electrical cords and outlets, which means that it may be carrying an electrical current. Wait until you've shut off the electricity to the affected circuits before you attempt to go near the water.

Begin drying the area as soon as you can. Grab towels and a mop, set up oscillating fans, and keep any ceiling fans going too. If the damage is significant enough to file an insurance claim, check with your insurance company before discarding your soaked belongings.

Also check with your insurance company on how to proceed with repairs. Taking photographs of the area will help you provide documentation.

An ounce of prevention...

To control water damage, consider installing electronic leak sensors near water-heaters and washing machines. When water is detected on floors, the leak sensor will sound an alarm – alerting you immediately about a problem that could take you days to find on your own.

HEARD BY OUR EDITORS

Elderly at risk of hypothermia

If you think ice fishermen are the only ones at risk for hypothermia, think again. Even those indoors can suffer from hypothermia, and the risk is increased for the elderly.

Hypothermia occurs when body temperature falls below 96°. Temperatures you may consider just slightly cool (60-65°), can be low enough to bring on hypothermia in the elderly.

Confusion, sleepiness, slurred speech and shallow breathing are all symptoms of hypothermia. The National Institute on Aging recommends the elderly protect themselves by: dressing in layers (even indoors), consuming hot foods and liquids, and using alcohol in moderation.

It is also essential to make sure the elderly's heating system is checked and ready to battle winter's cold.

Four Easy Ways To Support Our Troops



Separated from family and friends, while facing difficult and dangerous duties, the members of the U.S. military appreciate more than ever the support of a grateful country. If you'd like to support the troops – but aren't sure how – here's a few ideas to get you started.

Gift certificates. "Gifts from the Home-front" CertifiChecks are gift certificates for post exchanges made available through a partnership between the Army and Air Force Exchange Service and CertifiChecks, America's hometown gift certificate resource center.

CertifiChecks can be redeemed at all AAFES PX and base exchanges throughout the world.

Details are available via the AAFES website, www.aafes.com, and by phone at 1-877-770-GIFT (4438).

Phone cards. There's nothing like hearing a voice from home. That's the spirit behind Operation Uplink, a program which keeps military personnel and hospitalized veterans in touch with their families and loved ones by providing them with a free phone card. Using supporter contributions, Operation Uplink purchases phone cards and distributes them to servicemen and women who are separated from those they care about. Details are available at www.operationuplink.org.

Care packages. "Operation USO Care Package," initiated by the USO of Metropolitan Washington (USO-Metro), enables individuals to finance care packages for service members en route to overseas destinations. A contribution of \$25 will purchase one Care Package. The Care Packages

contain an assortment of items specifically requested by the military, such as prepaid international calling cards, disposable cameras, toiletries, and sunscreen.

Because of heightened security, individuals can no longer send letters and packages to "Any Service Member." Operation USO Care Package is approved by the Department of Defense, and provides a safe, easy way for individuals and corporations to show that their prayers and thoughts are with our service members.

For more information, call 1-866-USO-GIVE or visit www.usocares.org.

E-mail messages. Send a special message to the men and women of the armed services through Operation Dear Abby. This service provides an online resource that allows you to send a Sailor, Marine, Soldier, Airman, or Coast Guardsman a holiday greeting or message of support. Details are available at www.operationdearabby.net.

You can also send a free "virtual" thank-you card through Defend America at www.defendamerica.mil/nmam.html. The cards don't allow a personal message, but do include your name and hometown.

"U.S. military appreciate more than ever the support of a grateful country."

"Quotable."

The man who trades freedom for security does not deserve nor will he ever receive either.

– Benjamin Franklin



How To...

Avoid Auto Repair Scams

National figures indicate Americans spend more than \$20 billion a year on faulty or unnecessary auto repairs. Older Americans are often targeted because they are perceived as having more money. They also tend to be more concerned than younger drivers about issues of safety and liability.

If this sounds familiar, here's some guidance for avoiding future problems.

Ask friends for names of a reliable mechanic. Once there, find out whether or not the shop gives a written estimate or a completion date for the repair. Also, if the shop refuses to warranty the work or fails to offer a satisfaction guarantee, that's a shop to steer away from.

So, what are some common repair scams to watch for?

■ **Automatic transmission.** Poor transmission performance doesn't always mean a transmission repair. It could be as simple as a disconnected hose or plugged filter. Beware if you've got trouble shifting and the mechanic says he'll have to tear down the transmission to find the cause. The next step is to rebuild it for several hundred dollars.

■ **Brakes.** You bite on an advertised "brake special" for about 50 bucks, but once the mechanic takes a look, he says you'll need a complete brake job for about 500 bucks. With "low-cost" specials, there's usually more than meets the eye.

Establishing a practice of routine maintenance – involving fluids, filters, brakes and tires – helps keep you out of the repair shop. But when you must go in, look for the good business practices you expect from any service industry (kind of like you expect from us!), and don't settle for anything less.

MY WORD (...from page 1)

Since you wouldn't take a car that hadn't run in 6 months on a cross-country trip without a check-up, the same is true with your furnace. The point is that it's tune-up time. Tune-ups save you time, money, potential break downs and – as I always advise – **potential life threatening issues**. If my warning can save one life, it's worth repeating every Fall...

Carbon monoxide

is odorless and colorless. It kills over 100 people a year, and it's almost always avoidable with a qualified furnace inspection. So

simple to do; so simple to ignore. Please don't ignore it. Even if you get someone else to perform the inspection, please have it done.

There. End of scary advice. Get it done and it won't be scary! We look forward to hearing from you again.

And we hope you look forward to enjoying your Fall. Go outside. Watch some football. Kick up some leaves. Remind yourself that it really is Fall... even if the seasons are getting closer together!

Warmly,

Glenn Pack

Glenn Pack

P.S. This issue is full of neat tips to save you time and money. Call us to help you save *and* stay comfortable. We're ready to help you or your friends anytime!

HomePoints

Use kitchen, bath, and other ventilating fans wisely; in just 1 hour, these fans can pull out a houseful of warmed air. Turn fans off as soon as they have done the job.

Just set it, then forget it!

With a programmable thermostat, you program your "ideal" temperature for comfort and savings.

Then let it adjust the temperature while you're away. When you're home. When you're asleep. Silently and efficiently.

It saves time, energy and trouble. Don't you wish everything could be this simple? Call today and tell us you want to "forget it!"

That's Pack-Timco, Inc. at 203-847-8781.

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The Real Problem with 8-year olds...

If your heating and cooling system is over 8 years old, you may be spending more on energy and repairs than a new system would cost!

So let us come out for a **completely FREE, no obligation** survey of your equipment. We can tell you how much a new one could save you, right on the spot. It's fast, painless, and free.

Call Pack-Timco, Inc. at 203-847-8781.

Warning: If your system is a teenager, you need serious help. But you already knew that. Call now.

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Are You Paying to Cool or Heat Your Entire Neighborhood?

(We'll bet your neighbors appreciate it!)

We've found air leaks in home that amount to leaving the front door open all year long! **You may be doing the same thing.**

It's usually a bunch of small leaks all added together that make up this massive energy loss. A few inches at each window, plus a few more at the plumbing entries, plus a few more in the attic... well, you get the idea. Before long, you too can have a "door-sized" hole in your home!

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The Solution: Call us to give you a remarkable demonstration of our Blower Door. (You really need to see it!) It'll pinpoint air leaks with laser-like accuracy and tell you how you can save money right away! Call for your appointment.

Tell your neighbors to start buying their own energy!

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HOMESENSE