

village view

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If every American made a concerted effort to conserve energy, the effect on our economy and inflation would be astounding, yet the only reason most of us try is to save money. All right, that's a good reason, too.

Our government informs us that nearly 20% of our energy supply is consumed in the nation's more than 70 million households. Approximately half of that heats and cools our homes. Hot water uses another 15% and the balance provides light and operates appliances.

While it's unlikely we'll willingly adjust to living in cold houses in winter or excessively hot ones in summer, we can reduce our consumption of energy and realize dollar-savings at the same time. To accomplish this may require spending some money initially, but those dollars will come back to us in lower expenses in future years. As fuel prices rise, the return period shortens.

It doesn't take a lot of foresight to know another summer's coming to a close and soon those oil and gas bills will arrive once more. This is the time of year to beef up insulation, check caulking and weatherstripping around doors and windows, and equip them with well-fitting storm sash.

It costs 50% less to heat a properly insulated house fitted with storm windows and doors that have been weatherstripped and caulked to stop leaks and drafts. Eighteen million single-family homes in this country lack adequate insulation and storm windows. Is yours one of them?

The nation's demand for residential heating fuel could be reduced by 4% if this were corrected. More important to you, of course, your heating expenses could be halved if your house were fully insulated or had storm windows and doors.

A particularly effective way to save heat is to close off unused rooms or portions of the house. Keeping bedroom radiators turned off and doors closed reduces the space to be heated to a comfortable temperature. An extra blanket, or an insulating one, will keep you as warm while you're sleeping at 60° as you'd be with the bedroom heated to 72°.

And if you've a fireplace in your house, be sure the damper is closed unless there's a fire going. Otherwise, heat goes right up the chimney. Remember, too, cheerful as a burning fireplace may be, it sucks heat from every room in the house and warms only a small area of the room where it's located. It does provide a dandy flue for a woodburning stove, of course, and with a shedful of firewood to burn, a stove can save a bundle on your heat bill.

Keeping your thermostats set at 65° during the day and at 58° while you sleep can lower your heating costs by 15° if you've habitually left it at a constant 72° or 75°. If every household in the United States lowered heating temperatures ten degrees, demand for fuel would drop by nearly 600,000 barrels of oil per day during the winter season.

Be sure to have your furnace serviced annually. A clean and properly adjusted system costs less to operate than a dirty inefficient one. To maximize the heat your furnace produces keep radiators and air filters clean, too.

At night keep window draperies and shades closed; during the day open them and let the sun help warm your house. Wear wool to be comfortable in rooms heated to 65°. If you still feel chilly, put on a sweater. A woolen one instead of one of the man-made fabrics, worn over a cotton (not nylon) blouse will keep you much warmer.

It's easy to use more light than we need. That doesn't mean the whole family should huddle around one reading lamp each evening, nor grope around in the dark. Nevertheless, we can conserve electricity if we replace bright bulbs with ones of lower wattage for areas where strong light is unnecessary, and we can turn off lights we're not using. Burning one 100-watt bulb for ten hours consumes a cup of oil.

Oil- or Black Gold, as the drillers called it- is rapidly acquiring the value of real solid gold. Wouldn't you like a cup of gold for every ten hours of electricity you didn't burn unnecessarily?

To increase the efficiency of lamps and bulbs, keep them clean and use light colored lamp shades. Dirt and dark colors absorb light. Carry this principle further and use light colors for walls, carpeting, draperies and upholstery to reduce the amount of artificial lighting required.

Those "instant on" television sets, especially those with tubes, draw electricity even when they're turned off. To eliminate this waste, plug the set into an outlet controlled by a wall switch and turn the set on and off with the switch. When no one's watching TV, or listening to the radio, shut them off. If you're lonely without background noise, try humming.

Most of us have three major energy centers in our houses: the kitchen, the laundry, and the bath. Be sure your dishwasher is full when you use it. Fourteen gallons of hot water go down the drain each time it runs. When the wash and rinse cycles are complete, turn it off, open the door, and let the dishes air dry. The heat and humidity provided will help heat the house, make living at lower temperatures more comfortable, and be good for your furniture.

Make sure your refrigerator and oven door seals are airtight. If not, adjust the latches or replace the seals.

You can save fuel if you use flat bottom pans that cover your cooking elements, and if you keep their reflector pans shiny. Pressure cookers save energy by reducing cooking time. Plan to bake several dishes at once when you use your oven.

And to save on water bills as well as energy, have those dripping faucets or toilets repaired as soon as possible. This is especially important for hot water faucets which always seem to spring leaks sooner than cold ones.

Have you experimented with cold water washing detergents? Many work as efficiently as those that require hot water in the machine. Cold water rinses do a better job than hot. And wash only when you have a full load. To avoid running your dryer longer than necessary, separate drying loads into heavy and lightweight items since lightweight fabrics dry more quickly, dry consecutive loads for effective heat use, and clean the lint trap after every load.

Showers take less hot water than tub baths. When doing hand laundry, plan to wash several items at once, thereby saving hot water, soap, and your time.

Each energy-saver, by itself, amounts to a tiny percentage of our nation's daily consumption, but put them all together and multiply by the 220,000,000 people living in the United States, and it's apparent that each individual's contribution to energy conservation makes a big difference in the demand.

And there are important dollar savings to be realized as well. Down the pike a few years, there's coming a day when energy resources are exhausted. In the meantime, we're seeing inflation swallow up our hard-earned nest eggs. There is a direct correlation between this country's energy demands and this country's economic problems. If we don't do everything possible to control the former, we'll suffer dire consequences as a result of the latter.