

YOUR HOME

JANUARY
2009

TIPS AND TRENDS TO HELP MAXIMIZE HOME BUYING AND SELLING

GREEN REVIVAL

There has been a lot of talk about the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008, which was signed into law in October. But do you know what it means for you? If you use energy-efficient products in your home, you'll want to take note: Starting Jan. 1, 2009, the law expands and extends valuable federal tax credits for homeowners who make certain upgrades. These credits are largely the same, but not identical, to those that expired at the end of 2007.

Benefits include lower home energy bills, increased indoor comfort and reduced air pollution. In addition, the energy-efficient products eligible for the new federal tax credits actually lower the amount of federal income taxes that taxpayers must pay Uncle Sam.

Here's a look at how much you could save if you took advantage of some of these tax credits (but remember that your energy savings each year may be greater than the one-time tax savings):



| Purchase | Tax Savings | Notes |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---|
| Central air conditioner or heat pump | \$300* | Only some Energy Star products qualify. |
| Furnace or boiler | \$150* | Only some Energy Star products qualify. |
| Windows | Up to \$200* | All Energy Star windows qualify. |
| Insulation and sealing | Up to \$500* | Must meet model building code as installed. |
| Ground-source heat pump | Up to \$2,000 | Only Energy Star products qualify. |

* Maximum of \$500 total for home improvements.

In some areas of the country, consumers also will be eligible for utility or state rebates or state tax incentives for the same homes, vehicles and equipment.

Source: Alliance to Save Energy

WARM Welcome

In many parts of the country, temperatures are dropping — and heating bills are rising. But there are things you can do to keep warm *and* lower your heating costs. Consider these tips from the U.S. Department of Energy:



Take advantage of heat from the sun.

During the day, open curtains on windows with southern exposure to allow sunlight to naturally heat your home.

Cover drafty windows. Use a heavy-duty, clear plastic sheet on a frame or tape clear plastic film to the inside of your window frames. Make sure the plastic is sealed tightly.

Adjust the temperature. When you're home and awake, set your thermostat as low as is comfortable; when you're asleep or out of the house, turn your thermostat back 10 to 15 degrees for eight hours.

Find and seal leaks. Seal air leaks around utility cut-throughs for pipes, gaps around chimneys and recessed lights in insulated ceilings, and unfinished spaces behind cupboards and closets.

Reduce heat loss from the fireplace. Keep your fireplace damper closed unless a fire is burning. When you use the fireplace, open dampers in the bottom of the firebox or the nearest window slightly (approximately 1 inch) and close doors leading into the room.

Lower water heating costs. Water heating can account for 14 percent to 25 percent of the energy consumed in your home. Turn down the temperature of your water heater to the warm setting (120°F).

Source: www.energysavers.gov



fast fact >> >> >> >> >>

Wyoming leads the nation in coal production. The state typically produces more coal than the combined output of West Virginia, Kentucky, Pennsylvania and Montana.

Source: Energy Information Administration



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Extra Credit

You know that your credit score is one of your most precious resources — a good score can open doors and save you money. But what if your score got a little bruised amid the recent credit crunch? Don't fret. Max out your credit rating with these tips for repairing the damage.

- Order your credit reports from the top three credit bureaus — Equifax, Trans-Union and Experian. It's likely that each is slightly different. Creditors aren't required to report to all three credit bureaus, so they typically report only to the credit bureau to which they also subscribe.
- Examine your reports carefully. Nearly every consumer has an error on at least one credit report from one of the major credit bureaus. Carefully look for everything from typing errors, outdated and incomplete information to inaccurate account histories. Make a

thorough list of items you want to dispute and why.

- Dispute. You can either complete the dispute form provided with your credit report or write a letter. Clearly identify each mistake, and state why it's wrong. Send a photocopy of your credit report with the mistakes circled to the reporting credit bureau. Include copies of supporting documents.
- Document, document, document. Keep copies and records of all the forms, letters and documentation you send to the credit bureaus, plus the dates you sent them. The credit bureau must investigate any relevant dispute within 30 days of receiving your letter. Any item that is not verified by a creditor is removed.

Source: BankRate.com

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DID YOU KNOW

January is National Radon Action Month. Radon, a cancer-causing natural radioactive gas that you can't see, smell or taste, may be present in your home and can pose a danger to your family's health. Make sure your home is tested.

Source: Environmental Protection Agency

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