5. Programmable Thermostat

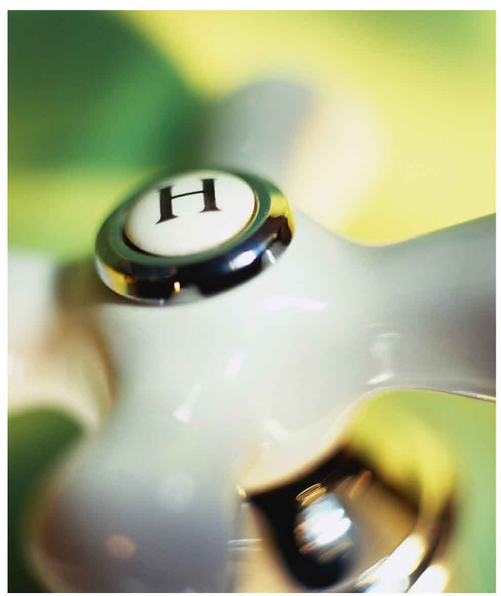
A programmable thermostat is the easiest way to reduce home heating and cooling costs. By simply setting the thermostat to a lower setting while a homeowner is away, most households can see a significant reduction in their energy bills. The average home could reduce their heating and cooling bill by $180 dollars a year just by properly setting their thermostats. Best of all, Columbia Gas is currently offering a $25 rebate toward the purchase of a qualifying programmable thermostat. The rebate can be downloaded at the Columbia Gas website.

6. Water Reduction

Due to its location, Lucas County has direct access to an ample supply of fresh, clean water. Many households still could and should do more to manage their water resources more efficiently. Thanks to a number of forward thinking organizations and companies, there are several simple, cost effective strategies nearly any homeowner can implement to reduce their water use.

The Toledo / Lucas County Rain Garden Initiative offers qualifying homeowners grants of up to 50% of the cost of installing a rain garden on their property. A rain garden is "a garden in a low spot that catches and slows storm water from downspouts, driveways, parking lots, and roads and allows it to infiltrate into the soil with the help of deep-rooted plants that like water." Along with grant money for qualifying homeowners, the Rain Garden Initiative also holds frequent workshops across Lucas County. More information on rain gardens and the grant program is available at the Rain Garden Initiative website.

Columbia Gas also offers a rebate on qualifying low-flow fixtures. The $10 rebate can be used to purchase shower heads and qualifying accessories that reduce water usage. Thanks in large part to advances in technology, these low-flow fixtures reduce water use without impacting the effectiveness of the fixture. The rebate can be redeemed at the Columbia Gas website and used both online and at hardware stores across Lucas County.



Many communities across the country have begun promoting the use of rain barrels to collect rainwater from downspouts. Thanks to American Rivers and the Rain Garden Initiative, residents of Lucas County can purchase rain barrels during the spring and summer. These affordable barrels collect rainwater, preventing it from overwhelming the sewer system. Best of all, homeowners can then use the captured rainwater to water their gardens. All of these simple improvements can save money, reduce flooding, and protect the environment.

Living Green & Saving Green in LUCAS COUNTY

Reducing home energy consumption is easier then ever.
Here are 6 simple, cost effective solutions to reduce energy use, save money, and protect the environment

LUCAS COUNTY Ohio 1835 · OWENS CORNING · GROSS ELECTRIC INC. · Columbia Gas of Ohio A NiSource Company · United Way

1. Energy Audits

In order to properly identify where a home is wasting energy and the best way to address it, a home energy audit is essential. A basic Energy Audit can be done by the homeowner with the help of the Energy Star Home Energy Yardstick or by using the Home Energy Saver web-based energy audit tool . For a more comprehensive audit, homeowners should work with a professional home energy auditor who can use infrared cameras and blower doors to find even the smallest home energy inefficiencies.

2. Insulation

One of the most effective strategies a home owner can take to make their home more energy efficient is making sure the home is properly insulated. For most homes, the attic is the easiest and most effective place to add insulation. Making sure an attic is properly insulated is an easy weekend project and can make animmediate difference on home energy bills and the comfort of a home. Best of all, this can take as much as 20% off a home's annual energy bill. Generally, if the wood beams (joists) are visible on the attic floor, more insulation is needed. Even if the wood beams are not visible, that's still no guarantee the home is properly insulated. The best thing to do is measure. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends up to an R-value of 60 for attics – which is about 19 inches of fiberglass batt insulation or 22 inches of blown insulation .

Despite the relative ease of installation and the clear financial benefits, Owens Corning estimates nearly 80 million homes in the U.S. are under insulated .

3. Caulking and Weatherstripping

Some of the most overlooked and easily solved home energy inefficiencies are small cracks along doors and windows that allow too much of the outside in. The majority of these leaks can be addressed with caulking or self adhesive weatherstripping. These products are widely available, affordable, and can be installed in minutes; providing an instant upgrade to a home's energy efficiency. Frequent problem areas include doors, windows, electrical outlets, vents and ductwork. To thoroughly identify all of a home's leaks and the best way to seal them, use of a professional energy auditor is encouraged.

4. Lighting

Lighting can account for 20% of a home's electric bill. Luckily there are simple, cost effective measures that everyone can take to reduce this cost. By switching out old incandescent light bulbs with new CFL's (Compact Fluorescent Light bulbs) homeowners will immediately begin saving money and reducing energy consumption. In many ways, changing to CFL's is the easiest way to reduce household energy use. saving money and reducing energy consumption. In many ways, changing to CFL's is the easiest way to reduce household energy use.

According to the U.S. Energy Star program, "If every American home replaced just one light bulb with an ENERGY STAR qualified bulb, we would save enough energy to light more than 3 million homes for a year, more than $600 million in annual energy costs, and prevent greenhouse gases equivalent to the emissions of more than 800,000 cars.

Care must be taken when recycling CFL's because they contain small amounts of Mercury. Many stores that sell CFL's offer free recycling services and numerous websites provide information on how to properly cleanup and dispose of broken bulbs. In Lucas County residents can contact Keep Toledo Lucas County Beautiful for information on recycling and disposing of CFL's and other material at (419) 213-2254 or online at http://www.co.lucas.oh.us/index.asp?nid=345