Northwestern | sustainNU

A Guide to Energy Saving for Homeowners and Renters

Finding time to seek out energy and cost saving options for your home can be difficult. sustainNU created this guide to help you make the most of the resources available through federal and local energy-saving programs.

1. Identify Potential Energy Savings in Your Home

Home energy savings apply to anyone who wants lower energy bills, a reduced carbon footprint, and a more comfortable home. Whether you are a homeowner or renter, there are many simple and affordable ways to save energy.

An easy first step is to assess your home for energy efficiency improvement opportunities. The US Department of Energy offers a Do-It-Yourself Home Energy Assessment Guide, which includes actions and resources such as:

- Locating and sealing air leaks within the home
- Examining ventilation to prevent indoor air pollution
- Checking insulation levels
- Inspecting the condition of heating and cooling equipment
- Replacing inefficient lighting with ENERGY STAR certified lighting options

Completing an assessment can help you narrow down the most effective energy-saving projects for your home.

2. Understand Rebates, Tax Credits, and Cost Savings

Energy bills are some of the biggest expenses for renters and homeowners. However, there are ways to reduce your bill.

The easiest way is to increase your home's energy efficiency, for example:

- switching to LED bulbs can save up to $75 per year on your electricity bill.
- sealing air leaks in your home can save you up to 10% on your annual energy bill.
- upgrading to an ENERGY STAR-rated washing machine can save up to $370 in energy costs over the lifetime of the appliance.

The second way to reduce costs associated with energy use is to take advantage of discounts and rebates offered by utility companies, federal incentives, and local energy programs. You can use the ENERGY STAR Rebate Finder and ComEd's Rebates and Discounts tool to find products like light bulbs, water dispensers, and washers that are eligible for rebates and discounts.

> **Rebate**: a refund offered for purchasing energy-efficient products or making energy-saving upgrades to your home

The 2022 Inflation Reduction Act provides federal tax credits in addition to expanding rebates to help you reduce your energy bill. Particularly if you are a property owner, take this into consideration when making improvements to your home!

> **Tax credit**: a financial incentive that reduces the amount of money one owes in taxes, in this case, to encourage taxpayers to make energy-saving upgrades in their home

3. Explore High-impact Energy Efficiency Projects for Your Home

Embarking on a new home improvement project can be overwhelming, no matter how many benefits come with the upgrade. That is why ENERGY STAR has crafted a detailed guide to making the process as easy as possible.

As more cities mandate new homes are built "electric-ready", it is worthwhile to consider electrification and similar requirements when purchasing or renovating your home.

4. Find ENERGY STAR *Certified Products*

Finding ENERGY STAR certified products is an important and easy part of making your home more energy efficient.

> **ENERGY STAR**: a certification for buildings and products that meet U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Energy standards for energy efficiency.

In just one year, ENERGY STAR-certified products helped consumers save 240 billion kWh of electricity and avoid $24 billion in lost energy costs. That is equivalent to the energy produced by 49,000 wind turbines in a single year!

You can search for ENERGY STAR certified products or check for the ENERGY STAR certification label on electronics next time you go to the store.

5. Get to Know Local Chicago and Evanston Programs

Chicago and Evanston residents can access free energy and cost-saving programs through ComEd. Programs are also available to aid households struggling to pay utility bills. Check out the People for Community Recovery Support Tool for additional information.

If you want to explore these topics further, check out ENERGY STAR's "Ask the Experts" resources or follow sustainNU's Instagram for sustainability-focused events and tips.