

Make 2009 your home's most energy efficient year ever!

ENERGY SPOTLIGHT[®]

January 2009

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Now that winter has set in, your home energy use is likely to rise. But that doesn't mean your energy bills have to follow suit. Check out our **Top 6 Energy Tips** that will help keep your home comfortable all year long, improve your home's energy efficiency, and possibly reduce your energy costs to boot!

Top 6 Energy Tips

1. Get a "tune-up" for your furnace. Just as your car will eventually break down without proper maintenance, your furnace needs to be cleaned and checked annually by a qualified HVAC technician to assure that it will operate properly. During the winter, also be sure to change your furnace's filter monthly, preventing dust and dirt from building up in the system and helping you avoid expensive repairs or an early system failure.

2. Install a programmable thermostat. A programmable thermostat gives you the ability to lower the heat while your home is unoccupied and overnight while you sleep, which can reduce heating costs by up to 10 percent.

3. Put on a cozy sweater. Each degree you lower your thermostat can save you between four and five percent on your energy bill. For example, if you lower the temperature from 72 to 68 degrees, you could save approximately 18%, or \$150 annually* for an average home.

**Based on a home using 1,040 therms per year at \$.80/therm.*

4. Wash away energy waste. Wash clothes in cold water and avoid using the longest setting unless completely necessary. Washing in cold water can save up to 12 gallons of hot water per load. Based on an average of eight loads per week, you could save approximately \$46 per year*. When replacing your washer, consider purchasing a front loader which uses less water and less energy per load.

**Savings assume eight loads of laundry with 12 gallons of water used for each load. Savings calculated on 57 therms of natural gas saved at a cost of \$.80/therm.*

5. Not around? Shut it down. Shut off lights, televisions, stereos and electric appliances when not in use. A single 60 watt light bulb left on 12 hours per day for one year uses 263kWh of energy, costing \$23 per year. Multiply this by the number of lights and appliances in your home and the potential for savings is significant.

6. Always replace your appliances with ENERGY STAR[®]-labeled products. ENERGY STAR-labeled products meet strict energy efficiency guidelines set by the Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Energy.

Americans, with the help of ENERGY STAR, saved enough energy in 2007 alone to avoid greenhouse gas emissions equivalent to those from 27 million cars – all while saving \$16 billion on their utility bills.

BONUS TIP: Get even more great tips by downloading our energy conservation guide, "Keeping the Warmth In and the Cold Out," which is filled with more than 60 low-cost practical solutions for making energy efficiency improvements in your home. You'll find this brochure under the Residential section of nicor.com, on the "Energy Efficiency Tips" page.



Tax credits for energy efficiency improvements reinstated for 2009

Tax credits for energy efficient home improvements (windows, doors, roofs, insulation, HVAC, and non-solar water heaters), which had expired at the end of 2007, are now available for improvements made during 2009. However, improvements made during 2008 are not eligible for a tax credit. The maximum amount that a

taxpayer may claim from all of these tax credits combined is \$500 over the lifetime of the tax credit (2006, 2007 and 2009). For more information, visit energystar.gov and then click the "Tax Credits Under the Energy Bill" icon at the bottom of the home page.

Consider Sharing with someone in need

As the calendar page turns to a new year and we reflect on all that is positive in our busy lives, we may forget that there are many people who have been affected by the uncertainty of our economy and are finding it difficult to heat their home.

The Sharing Program, administered by the Salvation Army, provides one-time annual grants of up to \$450 to qualified residential customers which is used to assist them with paying their natural gas bill. Nicor Gas matches contributions dollar-for-dollar, up to \$175,000 annually.

Customers can make one-time donations by simply checking the appropriate box on their

monthly gas bill payment stub and adding the amount to what is owed.

If you pay your natural gas bill electronically, call 1 888 Nicor4u (1 888 642-6748) to pledge a Sharing Program contribution that will be automatically added to your bill each month.

You can also send a check made out to:

**Sharing c/o The Salvation Army
P.O. Box 30049, Chicago, IL 60630-0049.**

Please consider making a donation to Sharing and thank you for your generosity!



Energy by Design – A Visual Arts Contest for Students

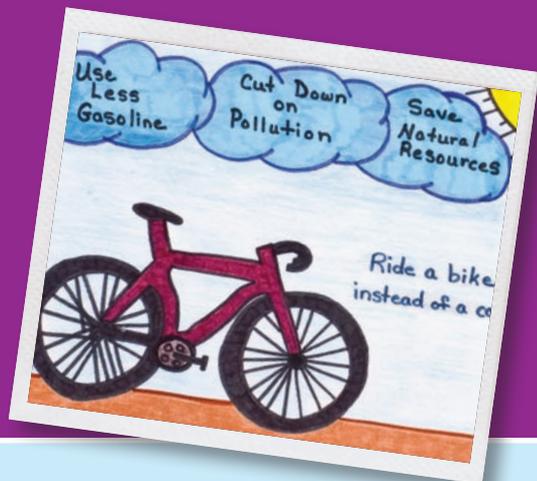
Calling all teachers! Are you interested in teaching your students about energy efficiency while competing for valuable prizes? If so, then Energy by Design is for you!

Energy by Design is a poster contest developed by Nicor and the National Energy Foundation for children grades K-8 designed to combine student's artistic talent with the ability to portray how to use energy efficiently. And, new this year, we're introducing "green tips" to demonstrate how being energy efficient makes a positive environmental impact.

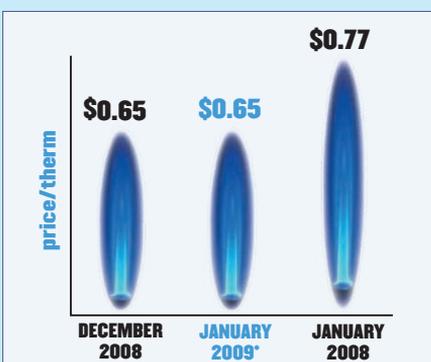
Nicor provides the materials – your job is to direct and motivate the students to produce a beautiful, unique interpretation of what energy efficiency means to them. All entries will be judged on scientific relevance as well as the student's ability to clearly and accurately communicate an energy efficient/green message. To be successful, students will need to communicate their understanding in a coherent, organized manner.

Grand Prize winners will get a \$1,000 savings bond, pizza party for their class and a prize pack filled with fun, age-appropriate prizes. Teachers of the grand prize winners will receive a \$1,000 classroom grant!

To enter, visit energybydesign.org where you will find information on eligibility requirements, how to order materials and judging criteria. Entries must be postmarked before February 12, 2009, so be sure to get started today!



January Natural Gas Cost



Every month, Nicor Gas files a gas supply charge with the Illinois Commerce Commission (ICC). It is the price customers pay for gas purchased from Nicor Gas during that month. As a regulated utility, Nicor Gas does not profit from the sale of natural gas. The price we pay for gas is passed on to our customers without markup. Visit nicorgas.com/gascost to use our "Bill Planning Guide" to get an idea of what your next month's bill might be.

**At press time, this was the price Nicor Gas filed with the ICC. Under ICC rules, the price may be changed up until the first of the month in which it is effective.*



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