

Home energy efficiency for \$50 or less

Dear Mr. Energy,

I really want to make my home more energy efficient, but I have no money and no time. I can probably find a couple of hours this weekend and my budget is \$50. Can I do anything that will make a difference in my home's energy use with such a small amount of money?

—Busy but Broke

Dear Busy,

Good news! There's plenty you can do to weatherize your home for \$50 or less. Tiny steps add up to big changes over time. If you've read this column before you know that I think

the very best first step for a homeowner to become more energy efficient is to have a comprehensive home energy audit to pinpoint exactly where you may be leaking energy, but

ASK Mr. Energy

since your current budget precludes an audit I can give you four different ways you can make that \$50 and your free afternoon work for you.

Cheap fix #1: seal switchplates and electrical outlets. In the world of energy efficiency, we like to think of the

living space of a home as being surrounded by a giant envelope. Anywhere this envelope is breached is a way for air (and therefore energy) to get in or out. Every single switchplate and electrical outlet is a breach of the envelope. Even though the actual leaks are probably small, they can add up to a big hole in your wall when put all together.

To do this, buy inexpensive foam outlet and switch covers at the hardware store — enough for every outlet and switchplate in your home — and a couple of tubes of caulk.

Remove the outlet and switchplate covers and run a thin bead of caulk where the box meets the drywall. Apply the foam cover on top and press the cover so it connects with the caulk. The foam cover by itself isn't airtight; the foam cover and the caulk have completely sealed the outlet. You

can further seal the leaks by buying baby safety covers for the electrical outlets you don't use to plug up the little holes that the outlet itself makes.

Cheap fix #2: weatherstrip doors and windows. The size weatherstripping you'll need will depend on the amount of air getting in or out (which you can determine by holding your hand up to the edge of the windows and doors on a windy day). Pay special attention to the bottoms of doors, as this is a place where previous weatherstripping may wear off more quickly than other places.

Cheap fix #3: seal up your escutcheon plates. Escutcheon plates are the metal or plastic round pipe coverings that are part of your plumbing. Anywhere pipes come out of the wall there is typically an escutcheon plate. Anywhere pipes come out of your wall, air can come in or out, too, so sealing these plates with a bit of caulk will prevent air, energy, and money seeping in or out of those holes.

Cheap fix #4: Using spray foam (you can buy cans of this at the hardware store), seal up anywhere your home's plumbing enters the house in your crawlspace.

Mr. Energy is a collaborative effort by Adrienne and Mark Bashista, owners of Home Performance NC, an energy auditing and home weatherization company. For information, www.homeperformancenc.com or 919.360.1570.



Pam Herndon, Agent
919-240-0155
1506 E Franklin Street
Suite 103
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
www.pamherndon.com

IN THE MIDDLE of a major life change WITHOUT HEALTH INSURANCE?

If you're between jobs, in school, or starting your own business, don't sweat it. I have plans from Assurant Health designed with your needs in mind. To find out more about short term, student or individual medical coverage, call me today.

See a local State Farm agent for more details on coverage, costs, restrictions, and renewability. Assurant Health products are underwritten and issued by Time Insurance Company, Milwaukee, WI, which is financially responsible for these products. Assurant, Assurant Health and Time Insurance Company are not affiliates of State Farm.



Returning health and care to healthcare...
for Chatham County



Integrative
Functional
Medicine

At Integrative Functional Medicine we focus on identifying and balancing the underlying causes of dis-ease. We specialize in European Biological Medicine, Nutritional Counseling and Chiropractic Care.

Dr. Roxanne Hollander, DC & Ron Veitel CNC, CMTA
919.533.3313 www.integrativefunctionalmedicine.com
90 Launis Street Pittsboro, NC 27312



**Herndon
Construction**

Wayne Herndon, OWNER

New Construction
Additions
Cedar Closets
Decks
Renovations

919.730.5577 cell
919.542.7082 fax

115 Ross Drive * Pittsboro, NC 27312

stretch your body and your dollars...

give the gift of **fitness**

3 month membership for \$199*

Includes complimentary fitness assessment and personalized exercise orientation

**no enrollment fee and
no long term obligation!**

SAVE \$242!

At Duke Center for Living, we want you to live better. This year, give yourself or someone you love the gift of fitness and good health. ASK FOR A GIFT CARD AT THE SERVICE DESK.

 **Duke Center for Living**
HEALTH AND FITNESS CENTER
at *Fearrington*

everyone is welcome

* Offer good through Jan. 4, 2010. Rate is for individual membership. Couple and family rates available.

100 Clynelish Close, Pittsboro | 919.545.2133 | dukefitnessfearrington.com

