



Stay fresh

Five tips for better indoor air quality

We spend a lot of time indoors. In fact, the Environmental Protection Agency estimates the average person spends 90 percent of their life indoors. (I don't know about you, but I suddenly have the urge to go for a long walk!)

Additionally, our homes are becoming more energy efficient—they're better insulated and sealed with less ventilation—which is great for our energy bills but not so much for our indoor air quality.

The thought of breathing in pollutants can be scary, but the truth is, indoor air pollution is common and simply unavoidable. The good news is there are ways you can easily improve the air quality of your home.

Here are five tips to help you breathe a little easier.

Change your air filter often.

Clogged, dirty filters reduce the amount of airflow and the HVAC system's efficiency. When a filter becomes too clogged, the excess dirt and dust



are sent through your air ducts, adding unnecessary allergens and other unwanted particles into your living space. During the cooling season (summer months), the Department of Energy recommends replacing your air filter every month or two. This is one of the easiest ways to promote better indoor air quality and energy efficiency.



Regularly vacuum carpet and rugs—especially if you have furry friends. The cleaner the home, the healthier the home. Vacuuming carpet and area rugs once a week can greatly reduce the accumulation of pet dander and dust inside your home. Frequently clean other areas that collect dust, like drapes, bedding and cluttered areas.

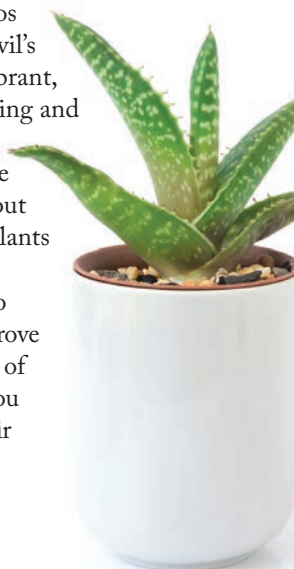
Use vents to remove cooking fumes. Those exhaust fans aren't just for when you burn the bacon. Fans help remove fumes emitted while cooking and eliminate unwanted moisture and odors. They may be a bit noisy, but these handy tools can help you improve

indoor air quality while you're preparing that culinary masterpiece (or even a grilled cheese sandwich!).

Get a handle on humidity. Summer months typically bring more humidity than we'd like, especially if you live in a high-humidity climate zone. Moisture in the air can carry bacteria and other unwanted particles that you eventually breathe in. Dehumidifiers work to remove that moisture from the air, reducing the amount of bacteria, mold and other allergens in your home.

Incorporate air-purifying plants into your living space. There are several varieties of indoor plants that can help detoxify your home from dust and germs found in a variety of home products, furniture and other materials. A few low-maintenance, air-purifying plants to consider are snake plants, aloe vera plants and pothos plants (also known as Devil's Ivy). **9612-18-1** These vibrant, lush plants are eye-catching and beneficial for any home. Remember to review care conditions and think about placement for any new plants you add to your home.

Taking simple steps to purify indoor air can improve health and overall quality of life. With a little effort, you can improve the indoor air quality of your home and breathe a bit easier.





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MAP LOCATION CONTEST

Every month we are printing four members' map location numbers in the newsletter. If you find your map location number call the WIEC office by the 25th of the following month, tell us where it is and we will give you a \$10.00 bill credit. Keep on reading the WIEC News.

To install (insulation) or not to install, that is the question

Making sure your home is properly insulated can go a long way toward making your home more energy efficient and comfortable.

Before you attempt to replace insulation, however, there are some tasks of the job to consider, including its location and your comfort level with starting and completing the job correctly. If you will be installing batt insulation, check to see if it is labeled with an R-value or find an online value chart by zone.

Consider the following before purchasing insulation.

Should I do the job myself?

Whether you take it on depends on several factors, according to the Insulation Institute, including:

- If the space you want to insulate is open and accessible. The easiest and most common places to do DIY installation projects are attics and basements.
- The type of material you want to use. Batts or rolls are often installed by homeowners, while other types of insulation can require professional installers.
- Your skills and comfort level.
- Any safety issues that might make the job more suitable for a professional.
- How much time will be needed to address air leaks.

Can I complete it safely?

Even if you are considering installing insulation in an open area that is easy to access, the space should be inspected. A professional should be called in to correct problems and complete the job

if you find these conditions or issues, according to the institute:

- Wet or damp insulation.
- Moldy or rotted attic rafters or floor joists.
- Vents that exhaust moist air directly in the attic space instead of outdoors.
- A history of ice dams in the winter.
- Little or no attic ventilation.
- Knob-and-tube wiring (homes pre-1930).
- Unsealed and uninsulated recessed ("can") lights (special care must be taken when insulating around these).
- Possible presence of asbestos (see next tip).



What is the age of my home?

If your home was built around 1975 or earlier, the insulation may be vermiculite, which can contain asbestos. It is a lightweight, pea-sized, flaky gray material, according to the institute. **3910-16** If you suspect you have this type of insulation, do not disturb it and hire a professional to test it. Your local health department might be able to help locate a reputable testing company. If asbestos is found, the insulation will need to be removed by a professional.

For more tips on energy efficiency and electrical safety, visit SafeElectricity.org.

Welcome New Members

Rayna & Mitchell Bagwell
Richard Burian
Tonya Corvaia
Kathryn Darrah
Larry Knowles

Mark Roberts
Vertical Bridge Development LLC
Ryan Wilhite
Mark & Peggy Winchester

APRIL 2022

Beat the peak this summer

As temperatures begin to spike, there are steps you can take to save money on energy bills this summer.

According to the Department of Energy, a typical home uses a whopping 48 percent of energy expenditures just on the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system (HVAC) system. Although a majority of that 48 percent is spent on heating expenses, Americans still spend \$29 billion every year to power their air conditioners.

Aside from replacing your central air conditioner with a newer, higher-efficiency model, there are some things you can do to increase efficiency, which can help reduce your energy bills.

Besides weather stripping and caulking around windows and doors in your home (always a good idea regardless of the time of year), Safe Electricity offers the following:

- Close curtains, blinds and shades during the hottest part of the day. Not only is about one-third of a home's energy lost around windows, but about 76 percent of sunlight

that falls on standard double-pane windows enters the home to become heat, according to energy.gov.

- If you don't already have one, install a programmable or smart thermostat. You can save up to 10 percent a year on heating and cooling by adjusting your thermostat 7 to 10 degrees from its normal setting for 8 hours a day, according to Energy.gov.
- Clean the filter and get your unit inspected by a HVAC professional.
- Consider changes to your landscaping. Greenery that includes shade trees and those that insulate the foundation can reduce energy costs.
- Ventilate the attic and check insulation. Adequately sized vents and an attic fan can help hot air from building. If your attic has less than 6 to 8 inches of insulation, consider adding more. **3814-45** By addressing air leaks around your home and adding insulation, homeowners can save around 10 percent annually on energy bills, according to energystar.gov.

- Get a pre-season checkup by a professional HVAC technician, which could help your air conditioner run more efficiently.
- Make sure your outdoor condenser unit is clean and free from debris. Ideally, the unit should be in the shade.
- Use your clothes dryer and oven during the cooler parts of the day.
- Consider a professional energy audit to reveal where your home is inefficient, including air leaks and exposed duct work.

Increased summer electric demand not only affects the monthly budget, but it can also seriously strain your home's electrical system, which can create dangerous shock and fire hazards. Flickering or dimming lights or frequent circuit breaker trips are signs of an overloaded electrical system or faulty wiring that should be checked immediately by a qualified electrician.

For more information on electrical safety, go to SafeElectricity.org or contact the co-op directly at 217-357-3125 or 800-576-3125.

10 EASY WAYS TO \$AVE

Here are 10 habits you can tweak to save energy:

1. Use cold water to wash your clothes.
2. Unplug battery chargers when not in use.
3. Skip the heat-dry setting on your dishwasher.
4. Unplug appliances and electronics not in use.
5. Run full loads of laundry instead of several smaller ones.



6. When drying clothes, include a dry towel for the first 20 minutes.
7. Keep your refrigerator at 35° to 38°F and your freezer at 0°F.
8. Reduce the setting on your hot water heater.
9. Use smart power strips that shut off power to items not in use.
10. When buying new appliances, consider ENERGY STAR versions.

Learn more at:

SafeElectricity.org



Budget Billing enrollment begins July 19

WIEC's Budget Billing program gives members a sure-fire way to anticipate the amount of their next electric bill and plan ahead for payment. It's also a great way to prevent large monthly fluctuations. The program is designed to keep your electric bills consistent every month of the year, as long as you remain on the plan. It's the ideal way to accurately predict your monthly expense, which makes managing your money simpler than ever.

When you sign up for Budget Billing, our Billing Coordinator looks at your electric usage for the past 12 months. She determines your specific average monthly kilowatt hour usage, then calculates what the bill for that amount of electricity would be at current rates to determine your monthly payment amount. Agreeing to pay for your average usage each month with this program allows you to plan ahead for a consistent expense, even in very cold or hot months when actual usage may be significantly higher. **3616-6**

Enrollment in WIEC's Budget Billing program is free. It is offered to members who have accounts in good standing with at least 12 months of service history to review. A member may opt back out of the Budget Billing program at any time by contacting WIEC's Billing Coordinator. If a member on Budget Billing becomes delinquent or enters into a delayed payment agreement, they will be removed from the Budget Billing program and any actual balance owed the co-op becomes due immediately. For members who remain on the program for the entire year, there is an annual "true-up" between the budget payments received by the co-op and the actual total usage and charges for the specific member for that year. Minor differences are either refunded via a bill credit or owed along with your usual June usage charges due in July.

Enrollment for Budget Billing this year begins on July 19. For more information on the program, or other billing-related questions, please contact our office at 217-357-3125 or 800-576-3125.

- 1 Flashes of lightning between a thunderstorm and the earth are called cloud to ground.
- 2 There is roughly 5 to 10 times more intra-cloud lightning than cloud-to-ground lightning.
- 3 The vertical extent of cloud-to-ground lightning averages 3 to 4 miles.
- 4 Lightning often strikes up to 10 miles away from rainfall.
- 5 Lightning can occur in winter during heavy snowfalls.
- 6 Lightning can strike in the same place twice.
- 7 Lightning has 100 million to 1 billion volts and contains billions of watts.

Safe Electricity.org®