

# Insulation can save on heating

The chill is here but its not too late to insulate.

A Kansas State University specialist says investing a little time in home maintenance before winter arrives can help to make the family more comfortable and yield a savings in home energy costs.

But, even though winter is here, the sooner done the sooner savings can start.

Bruce Snead, K-State Research and Extension residential energy specialist, said heating and cooling costs typically account for up to one-third of home energy costs. This year, Kansans can expect an increase in natural gas prices of from 20 to 40 percent.

You would have been better to have checked your home heating system before winter sets, said Snead. Basic maintenance includes cleaning or changing the filter, oiling the motor and fan and checking to see if vents and ducts are open and clear.

Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for seasonal or otherwise scheduled maintenance, he said. And, if you're uncertain about doing the maintenance yourself, scheduling a service call can help to ensure a smooth transition to the heating season.

The cost of a service call can be offset if it reveals potential mechanical problems and optimizes system performance, Snead said.

Consumers also can trim home heating costs by installing a pro-

grammable thermostat, he said. This will allow you to maintain a comfortable temperature when family is present, and reduce energy use at night and when everyone is away. Programming can bring the temperature back into the comfort zone before the family wakes.

A programmable thermostat costs about \$40-\$150, and will usually pay for itself in three years, he said.

Adjusting a traditional thermostat also can yield a savings, he added. Lowering the thermostat from 68 to 67 degrees can yield a 2-3 percent savings; turning the thermostat down while sleeping can yield a 1 percent savings. Older adults generally prefer a warmer environment, but those who wear a sweater can save on energy costs.

To further reduce home heating costs, Snead suggested:

- Caulking around windows and doors, in gaps or cracks between the foundation and siding, stone or brickwork.

- Checking ductwork for leaks, and sealing leaks.

- Sealing and insulating an attic floor.

- Sealing and insulating the perimeter of a crawl space, and sealing ductwork in the crawl space.

To reduce general energy use within the home, he offered familiar, but sometimes overlooked, tips:

- Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent bulbs.

- Turn off lights when leaving a room.

- Unplug phantom energy users, including small appliances, a cell phone charger or video game box, when not in use.

- If you are on time-sensitive electrical rates, use appliances at off-peak times or when rates are lower. Do laundry during early morning or evening hours in cold water; run the dishwasher when full, before bedtime, when rates are lower. If unsure about rate structure, contact the electric utility.

- Use appliances, such as a slow cooker or electric skillet, that require less energy.

You might consider replacing aging appliances with newer, more energy-efficient models, Snead said. Replacing a five- or more year-old dishwasher or 10- or more year-old refrigerator can generally yield a savings in energy use that will, over time, offset the cost of repairing or replacing the older appliance. If replacing a refrigerator, don't put the old one in the garage and plug it in.

Look for appliances with an "Energy Star" label with a cost estimate for operation, he said.

Information on conservation, energy use and basic home maintenance is available at county and district Extension offices and on Extension's energy web site: [www.sustainable-energy.ksu.edu](http://www.sustainable-energy.ksu.edu).

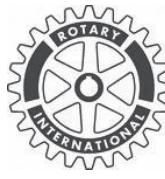
A Basic Home Maintenance guide can be downloaded at [www.oznet.ksu.edu](http://www.oznet.ksu.edu). Click on "Publications" and then search for Basic Home Maintenance (# 134C).

## STUDENT OF THE MONTH



### KIRI KENDRICK

Grade: Senior



Parents:  
Mark & Amie  
Kendrick

Kiri, a Senior at Colby High School, is the December Student of the Month.

Kiri's school and community activities include Student Council, International Club, FCA, Yearbook, Volleyball, Cross Country, Basketball, Softball, 4-H, Genesis Food Drives, Recycling, CROP Walk, Church Fundraising Dinners, and Special Olympics Bowling Volunteer.

Kiri's academic emphasis has been the Regent's Curriculum. She plans to attend Fort Hays State University of Kansas to major in Chemistry following a Pre-Optometry Program of Study.

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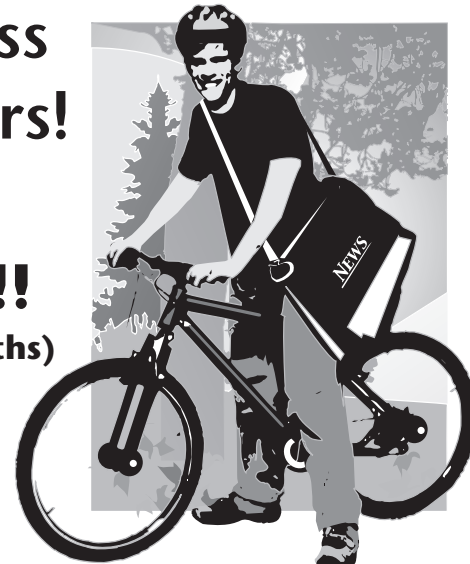


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