

HOME MATTERS

A joint initiative of the New Hampshire Carbon Challenge and the Massachusetts Climate Action Network

Fall 2008 Vol 1, Issue 4

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About Us

This newsletter is a joint project of the following New England-based groups:



[The New](#)

[Hampshire Carbon Challenge](#)

works to educate, inspire and support sustained reductions in residential energy consumption. Their [New England Carbon Estimator](#) helps households and communities throughout New

Welcome!

Welcome to the fall issue of *Home Matters*, from the New Hampshire Carbon Challenge and the Massachusetts Climate Action Network. Our goal is to reach out to YOU--New England residents who want to reduce your energy use.

Thankfully the price spikes in heating fuels we saw earlier this year have at least temporarily abated - but I think we can all agree this is not the last we've seen of \$4.50 heating oil. New England homeowners could spend as much as \$3000 to heat their homes this winter, depending upon what happens to the prices of fossil fuels, and the size and energy efficiency of the home. So, keeping warm could amount to half or even more of our total home energy cost!

In this issue of *Home Matters*, we've tried to compile a list of simple heat-saving projects you can undertake quickly. And if you're considering a new heating system, we give you some things to think about, with respect not only to your economic cost but also to your impact on the environment. Remember that virtually everything you do to reduce the amount of energy you use also lowers your carbon footprint. Thanks for reading, and keep warm!

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Carbon Implications of Home Heating Methods

England reduce their carbon emissions and energy costs.



[The](#)

[Mass Climate Action Network](#)

is a coalition of locally organized groups that are fighting the climate crisis. MCAN's [Low Carbon Living Program](#) helps households reduce energy use, save money, and lower the impacts of climate change.

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Home Matters [Summer 2008](#)

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It's finally time to replace that 1920s boiler in the basement. As an environmentalist, what kinds of things should you think about?



Well, the first place to look for heat is the ultimate source, the sun. In many parts of the world, solar hot water systems can be used for space heating needs.

Improvements in technology have made large solar systems viable even farther north than New Hampshire and Massachusetts. If your house has the proper exposure, solar water heating is a zero-carbon, zero-fuel cost option.

Your other option is to get heat from burning something. And burning something costs two things: first, it costs you money, and second, it costs us carbon dioxide (CO₂). Well, actually, it doesn't *cost* carbon, it *fre*es it - as in: frees it from being bound up in fuel and releases it into the atmosphere, contributing to global climate change.

Here are some cost and CO₂ comparisons from the four major ways to heat your home this winter. [Read the rest](#)

Preparing Your Home Now for the Upcoming Winter



It wasn't that long ago when getting your home ready for a New England winter was a fairly straightforward process. Pull the room air conditioner in, replace the screens with storm windows, locate the plow guy, fill the oil tank and you're done. Nothing too difficult about that. But over the last few years as heating fuel prices (particularly oil) have increased, it's gotten A LOT harder... the typical household in New Hampshire or Massachusetts will spend **over \$3000** in 2008 to heat their home.

There are a lot of things you and your family can do right now to reduce your heating bills.

You might be surprised to learn that you can probably save 20% or more on your heating costs with

actions that are easy to implement and don't cost too much. If you want to reduce your heating bills this winter and your carbon emissions here's what we suggest. [Read the rest](#)

Money Talks: Discounts, incentives, rebates, and tax incentives

There are many rewards for home energy efficiency, including the chance to save money on heating AND get money back:

- Rebates on weatherization materials (air sealing, insulation, etc.)
- Free energy audits
- Emergency heating assistance for people with limited incomes
- Tax credits for buying big-ticket items (energy-efficient appliances, heating equipment, windows, insulation, etc.)



This is a complex area, as there are many options and providers. One important lesson: If you are thinking of doing anything big (like getting a new furnace), check into the incentives first. That way, you'll know what you need to do to be eligible for the funds. Here are some tips on how to find out more. [read the rest](#)

Is Wood Burning An Environmentally Friendly Heating Choice?

Using wood from sustainably managed forests in Massachusetts and New Hampshire can make economic and environmental sense this winter. As heating oil prices have increased, so have the prices of cordwood and wood pellets, but they are much more economical than fuel oil. Considering the energy content of both fuels, if heating oil costs \$4.00/gallon, firewood would need to cost \$515 per cord and wood pellets \$470 per ton to be equivalent in cost.



Since trees are part of the carbon cycle, taking in carbon dioxide as the tree grows, develops and matures and then releasing this carbon dioxide when the tree is burned or decays naturally, trees from sustainably managed forests can be regarded as carbon neutral (for a thorough discussion of the carbon neutrality of wood see this [post](#)). Although wood burning does produce air polluting particulates, wood stoves manufactured since 1990 burn wood more cleanly and efficiently than older wood stoves.

Of course, wood burning has special safety considerations and you should check with your insurance carrier before using a wood stove. See the UNH Cooperative Extension's excellent guide to [Heating with Wood](#) for more information on using wood safely.

Energy Tips from the Pros

**We asked home energy professionals:
"What's the one thing you recommend people do to
reduce their fuel bills this winter?" Here's what they said.**

"The single easiest and most effective thing you can do to reduce your household energy use is to **lower your thermostat setting.**" --- *Paul Eldrenkamp, Energy Auditor and Energy Efficiency Expert, Byggmeister Construction, Newton, MA.*

"**Install *real* low-flow faucet aerators and showerheads** - 0.5 gpm bathroom faucet aerators, 1.5 gpm kitchen faucet aerators, and 1.5 gpm showerheads. For heating: **Get a blower door test** - it opens up a whole new world of air sealing." --- *Andy Duncan, Energy Auditor and Energy Efficiency Expert, Building Energy Technologies, Concord, NH.*

"**AIR SEAL AIR SEAL AIR SEAL.....and air seal some more!**" --- *Laurel McEwen, Energy Auditor and Energy Efficiency Expert; Stepping Up Green, Eliot, Maine.*

"My recommendation is to **get professional help.** Before you spend money and do a lot of work, don't you want to know that what you are doing is going to work and be a cost effective investment? I have seen many well meaning individuals do a lot of hard work and spend money only to see that work need to be undone to be redone properly." --- *George Malette, Designer and Energy Efficiency Consultant; Weare, NH.*

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