

Energy-efficient choices at home

By Karen Bradley



These days, we're all trying to be more environmentally responsible — and making energy-efficient choices at home is one of the best ways to go green without sacrificing comfort or style. By conserving energy, your wallet will see more “green,” too, with the savings you receive on your utility bills.

Studies show that improving efficiency is one of the quickest ways the United States can reduce its overall energy use and protect the environment from greenhouse gases. Natural gas companies like Virginia Natural Gas are already making that happen. Today's average American home uses one-third less natural gas than three decades ago, thanks to utility energy-efficiency programs and higher-efficiency natural gas appliances.

Virginia Natural Gas has promoted energy conservation for years as the right thing to do for customers and for the environment. Its innovative energySMART program offers a variety of ways for customers to learn about energy conservation, save money on their energy bills and take advantage of energySMART rebates on high-efficiency equipment.

Free programmable thermostat

One of the most popular energySMART programs is the free programmable thermostat from Virginia Natural Gas. Customers who have a natural gas furnace as their primary heating source can log onto virginianaturalgas.com to request their free programmable thermostat, which will help them regulate their energy use.

Proper use of a programmable thermostat can save the average homeowner around 15 percent annually on energy bills and is a convenient way to monitor energy use. Simply set the thermostat to regulate your home's temperature automatically, night or day. VNG's free thermostat takes the guesswork out of remembering to lower the thermostat when you're away from home or asleep.

Efficiency rebate program

The Virginia Natural Gas rebate program offers a variety of options for customers who upgrade their current heating equipment to a high-efficiency furnace. Heating and cooling your home accounts for the largest portion of your energy expenses, so upgrading to a high-efficiency furnace makes good energy sense. A new furnace will work more efficiently than older models, thus reducing your energy use. High-efficiency furnaces with a .90 EF factor can receive a \$500 rebate.

Heating water is the second highest energy cost in the home. Upgrading to a tankless water heater will save on energy use by heating water only when you need it — instantly. You don't waste precious energy — or dollars — maintaining a tank full of hot water. And no more worries about running out of hot water. Tankless systems provide a continuous supply so the whole family can enjoy hot showers, even while the dishwasher is running. VNG currently offers a \$500 rebate on a tankless water heater with an EF of .82 or greater.

If a tank water heater is more your style, a high-efficiency one with a .62 or greater can qualify for a \$150 rebate from VNG. Don't wait until it's too late to make the right choice for your energy needs... learn the age of your current equipment, check the efficiency rating and replace it before it breaks down.

Educating homeowners

Educating homeowners on the importance of properly maintaining their equipment is another goal of energySMART. Regular heating system checkups each season and routine replacement of air filters keep equipment running at peak efficiency, which can help save on energy bills. An online home energy audit tool and other educational tips can be found on the energySMART page at virginianaturalgas.com. You can even test your energy smarts with VNG's online quiz.

You don't have to sacrifice comfort or style to save energy and do the right thing for the environment. Visit virginianaturalgas.com for full energySMART program offers and terms and conditions.

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