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## Five simple ways to save energy at home

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By Joan Brunskill, Associated Press Writer

It's easier than you think to paint your house "green."

Simple changes can save resources and energy — and perhaps slow global warming. A growing demand for energy efficiency topped findings from the American Institute of Architects' home-design trend survey for the second quarter of 2007.

The group's chief economist, Kermit Baker, said the panel of 500 architecture firms found high demand for insulation panels, tankless water heaters, geothermal heating and cooling, and green flooring products such as bamboo and cork.

Warren, Vt.-based architect John Connell, a member of the institute's housing committee, said the No. 1 question he gets from confused homeowners is where to start.

"None of the more sexy energy-saving installations — small windmills on the roof, photovoltaic panels, solar-water collectors — make any sense until you've done your insulation, weather stripping and other fundamentals," he said.

For the do-it-yourself homeowner, this is Connell's five-point plan for easy, immediate action:

### LIGHTING

Changing to fluorescent bulbs makes sense despite recent concerns about how to dispose of the small amount of mercury they contain.

"If you put in compact fluorescent lighting today you won't have to change those bulbs for a couple of years at least — and systems are quickly evolving to deal with disposal as more and more people do this," Connell said.

The Environmental Protection Agency is working with bulb makers and retailers to expand recycling and disposal options. Check with your local sanitation department to see if you can recycle bulbs containing mercury. If not, the EPA suggests sealing the bulb in two plastic bags and putting it in outside trash for normal collection.

### WINDOWS

First, with a compass, identify which windows face south and which north. Use insulating shades on those windows to keep heat in or out and slow the loss of energy, Connell said.

You can open and close windows and shades to help heat or cool the house, depending on season and geographical location.

"In the south, thermal shades work best on the outside, for a cooling effect in hot climates," he said. They'd have to be made of materials that stand up to UV rays. "In the north, shades work best on the inside, for keeping heat in."

### APPLIANCES

Taking good care of appliances has a big payoff. "Everything in my life, including the car, could save energy, if I just maintain it properly," Connell said.

Clean your refrigerator's ventilation grill. Have your boiler, furnace, air conditioning units and clothes dryer serviced thoroughly — especially if there

are funny noises emanating from any of them.

#### RECYCLE HEAT

Recycle your heated clothes-dryer exhaust through an appropriate filter into your house.

"It's so simple. Go to the local hardware store and ask for a bypass filter — it's just an 8-inch cube. You just need a screwdriver and the instructions are right on the package," he said. "The bypass helps humidify and heat the house, while the filter still prevents lint and dust from getting into the air you breathe."

This change also helps prevent ice build-up and rot on the outside of the house where the exhaust is vented.

"Of course, it will also raise the moisture level in the laundry room, so remember to leave that door open."

#### WEATHERSTRIP

Connell called weatherstripping the first line of defense, in the sun belt or snow belt.

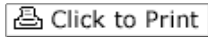
"Weatherstrip every door and window in your house — the difference this makes is amazing if you've never tried it. Also check heat loss through mail slots, mechanical chases, chimney flues and outlets on exterior walls," he said. "The reality is, you lose far more heat from your house through air leakage than from anything else."

Outlets on exterior walls can also be weatherstripped, he added. "Buy foam weatherstripping gaskets, take off the coverplates, stick on the foam, then replace the coverplates."

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