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Your home's air leakage can add 30 to 40% to your energy bills and harm your home.

The harm comes from air, leaking into walls from the interior of the home, carrying humidity with it. When the moisture hits a cold surface it condenses, causing the insulation and surrounding wood to get wet. Eventually, the air leakage can lead to mold growth and wood rot.

Do you want to save energy and have lower monthly utility bills? New windows and doors may look nice and help you sell a home but you can do far less expensive things in just a few hours to save energy and lower your utility bills.

Most air leakage and energy loss occurs around penetrations (openings) in the attic and around the top of the foundation. But because most these areas are rarely seen, we don't think about them.

Ready for some dirty work?

- Seal holes around wiring and plumbing stacks
- Caulk along to tops of interior walls
- Seal and caulk even the smallest crack or opening.

For even more protection against air leakage move inside:

- Use clear caulk around window frames where the trim meets the wall
- Caulk all cracks in non-operable windows
- Add weather stripping to windows and doors
- In the winter add a layer of clear plastic to the outside of windows

Additional interior work includes:

- Install foam gaskets on outlets and switches on exterior walls
- Seal around all ceiling fixtures, heat registers, cabinets, bathtubs
- Seal around drain and water pipes where they enter the wall

An easy way to find leaks is to light smoke sticks or incense sticks on a windy day and hold the stick close to windows, electric outlets and doors to see if the smoke moves.

Now it's time for the foundation work.

- Seal the top of the foundation (rim joist) with caulk or expanding foam on the inside of the crawl space to stop air leakage.
- Stop water intrusion by caulking around the entire outside of the home to prevent rainwater getting into walls but does very little to stop air from leaking into your home.

If all of this is just more than you want to do on a Saturday morning you can hire a professional. Make sure they have proper training and equipment to pinpoint air leakage, identify and deal with combustion safety problems.

Sealing your home attic and foundation could save you money. If your average heating or cooling bill is \$160 a month a 30 percent savings is \$48 a month and \$576 annually. That's no small change.

**Denise McCravey**, Broker/Owner of RE/MAX Results, believes education is vital. Her EcoBroker designation, for licensed real estate professionals, provides education on energy and environmental issues and strategies for buyers and sellers.



Stopping air leakage into and out of a home is important for energy savings and protection from the damaging effects of moisture. [www.EnergyStar.gov](http://www.EnergyStar.gov)