

## Make home warm, cozy

\$1,500 tax credit still available to ward off winter's chill

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We're coming down the homestretch.

The \$1,500 tax credit for energy saving systems and products will expire Dec. 31. And good weather for do-it-yourself weatherization projects probably will expire a lot sooner.

So what should you take care of right now?

You've heard it before, but caulking, weatherstripping and sealing cracks where cold air can enter your home are some of the cheapest ways you can make a dent in your winter heating bills.

Bigger savings come with bigger price tags: Adding insulation and replacing windows or your furnace with an energy-efficient model all dent your wallet as much as your heating bill. This is when the tax credit can help, by giving homeowners a credit for 30 percent of the cost, up to \$1,500.

You can spend up to \$5,000 (the total over two years, 2009 and 2010) on one or multiple products and get 30 percent, or up to \$1,500, back as a tax credit. But if you maxed out with a \$1,500 credit in 2009, you're not eligible for the credit this year.

The energy-saving products also

must be for the home you live in and own (not rent).

Dan Travaille, of USA Insulation in Omaha, said the tax credit generally hasn't been a factor in upgrading insulation because people don't understand it.

"It's been advertised the last two years. People know it's there," Travaille said, but they're still confused about how it works.



Fiberglass and other types of insulation can help seal out the cold.

## Winterize: \$1,500 energy tax credit can help make your home cozy

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Travaille, who has the Omaha-area franchise for USA Insulation, said that in his 15 months with the company, he has seen some homes built before 1950 that have little or no insulation.

The type of insulation he installs is a nonexpanding foam injected from the outside into the attic, walls or wherever it's needed. Batt types of insulation also qualify for the credit.

Aside from insulating, there are several other areas of the house homeowners can shore up before winter.

» Check doors and windows for exterior cracks where the frame meets the brick or siding. These areas require proper caulking. While inspecting the windows, consider replacing the weatherstripping if it is old and out of shape. Switch out summer window screens with glass replacements after the first chill and cover basement window wells with plastic shields before the first snow. Consider replacing the weatherstripping around exterior doors.

» When inspecting the furnace, check for rust falling from the heat exchange. Installing a programmable thermostat saves energy by allowing you to lower the temperature while you're away from home or sleeping.

» If you have a fireplace, don't leave the flue open. That's like chopping a hole in the roof of your house for warm air to escape. Keep the flue closed whenever the fireplace isn't in use.

» Seal air ducts with duct tape to prevent warm air from leaking before it reaches its destination. Check exhaust systems open to the outside, such as the one for your clothes dryer. Make sure the flipper vent closes when the dryer isn't on.