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Water and light programs offer ways to conserve energy



Last week, this column discussed the Columbia Water and Light Department's Tree Power program, which is only one of many the city offers to help you reap the economic and environmental benefits of increased home energy efficiency. Here are some others:

ENERGY AUDITS

Three types of energy audits are available. The first is a walk-through, which assesses your house's "thermal shell" by evaluating insulation, weather stripping, the efficiency of your furnace and air conditioner, and other sources of heat loss.

After gleaning some suggestions from the walk-through audit, the next step is an air infiltration audit. A fan is used to pull air out of the house and depressurize it, drawing outside air in through cracks in the structure. Leaks and cracks are detected by feeling for cold drafts, and caulking and weatherstripping can be added to plug any holes. Air infiltration audits can only be performed during fall, winter and spring.

The most advanced energy audit is an infrared scan of the exterior of the house. This test, which uses more advanced equipment to determine energy audit.

LIGHTEN UP

The Lighten Up program provides a \$7.50 rebate for the first compact fluorescent light that you buy; commercial customers are eligible for five rebates. This program is about to come to an end, so you must take advantage of it very soon.

where your house is losing heat, is only effective during the coldest winter months.

CONSERVATION LOAN PROGRAM

Once you have a plan to improve your house's energy efficiency, you can apply to the Conservation Loan program to obtain a low interest loan to help pay for the improvements.

These low interest fixed-rate loans can be used for adding insulation, replacing a window air conditioner with more efficient central air, purchasing a heat pump hot water heater, or installing a high efficiency home heat pump.

The loan payback schedule is determined by the type of equipment purchased: two-year payback for insulation, three years for air conditioner upgrades, and four years for a new heat pump. To qualify for a loan, you must be a customer of the water and light department, have a good credit history and have had a home

Compact fluorescents fit into most incandescent fixtures, yet they are three times more energy efficient than incandescent bulbs and last 13 times longer. A compact fluorescent bulb can save you approximately \$30 to \$40 over its lifetime, but it has a high initial cost. The Lighten Up program helps reduce the initial cost of purchasing one of these advanced bulbs.

To receive a rebate, send the store receipt, a water and light rebate coupon and the UPC code from the lamp package to the water and light de-

partment. The Lighten Up program will end on May 31; all applications for rebates must be received by that date.

All of these valuable programs offer a great opportunity to save money and the environment by making more of the energy we have. For more information on any of these programs, call 874-7325, or write to Energy Department, Columbia Water and Light, PO Box N, Columbia, Mo., 65205. Energy department personnel can also be scheduled for speaking engagements by contacting the above number.

If you have a suggestion for a column, a gripe, a success story or whatever, write it down and send it to me, care of the Columbia Daily Tribune, PO Box 798, Columbia, Mo., 65205.