

CHRISTMAS GIFTS – ENERGY STYLE!

Here they are – the top items that should be on your gift list this year and the reasons you should consider them. People are always asking me what you can do to save some money at home. This list contains the best items (in order) that I think will help each of you save money for the coming year.

1. Programmable Thermostat: Do I sound like a broken record on this one? This is the number one item you should have in your home. Cost – about \$50 at any hardware store. Save at least \$100 per year! This should be a no-brainer if you haven't already switched. Use the \$50 you save for a night on the town! Most houses in the region have electric heat pumps with back up heat. You will need to know your system type before you go shopping.

2. CFLs – Compact Fluorescent Bulbs: Did you know that 90% of the electricity used in a regular bulb (incandescent) is converted to heat energy and not light? CFL bulbs use 2/3rds less electricity and don't generate nearly the same heat. Bulbs come in squiggly looking shapes and also in "regular" looking shapes. There are dimmable bulbs, recessed lighting bulbs and even three-way bulbs available. A CFL will save you about \$30 over the life of the bulb! They last about 10 years, and you will prevent about 500 pounds of greenhouse gas emissions for every one you replace. That's a bunch of potential cash just sitting there and waiting for you to rake in. Why waste it on heat energy using those old bulbs?

3. P3 Kill-a-watt Electricity Usage Monitor: Did you know that the vast majority of your home electronics use electricity even when they are turned off. You can use this little gadget to determine which gadgets need to be unplugged and which ones you think you can live with. This is called your vampire load. Get that vampire out of your house with this \$30.00 investment. This product is available online I have not found it available locally.

4. Water Heater Blanket: This big time energy user sits in your attic trying to keep water hot. Have you been in your attic in January. It's COLD up there. Install this blanket on your water heater and cut the run time for your heater this winter, or put it on in the summer and the old unit may not ever run. This \$19.00 investment will pay for itself very quickly.

3. Refrigerators/Freezers/Washers/Dryers: If you have one of these that is more than 15 years old you can save a bundle of cash by replacing them. Obviously you have to shell out money up front, but look at these savings stats: Refrigerators (and freezers) manufactured since 2001 are 30 percent more efficient than any from the 1990s. A 1993 refrigerator was 99% more energy efficient than one from 1980. Washers manufactured in 1999 are 51% more efficient than a similar model made in 1981. And get this – a new horizontal axis (front load) washer can save you \$100 per year over a traditional top load washer. Electric dryers cost substantially more to operate than gas dryers. If you need a new dryer consider gas. And, NEVER buy an appliance without the Energy Star logo! Time to upgrade an appliance?

5. Shades/blinds: If you don't have these on all of your windows consider them highly. Remember, there is a 10 degree difference between the window side and room side of a shade when it is lowered. The most energy efficient ones actually ride in tracks that adhere to the molding on each side and top of the window. Often called window quilts these can actually be as high as R5 insulating factor which is very good. Looking to update a room in your house? Consider a thermal window covering.

Consider these energy gifts for your holiday shopping experience – save dollars and your environment at the same time!

A few did you knows:

90% of U.S. electricity comes from nonrenewable sources

Everything I wrote about above is exactly what we are doing here in our schools.

Last month the district saved energy at a 26% level. Translates into \$115,276 we didn't need in our energy budget that month!

CFL bulbs are more efficient today than they were just 2 years ago.

CFL bulbs have 4 milligrams of mercury – a fraction of the 500 milligrams found in old mercury thermometers. Using CFL bulbs reduces mercury pollution because the main source of mercury pollution is coal burning power plants – the most common source of electricity in the U.S.

Should you wait for incandescent bulbs to burn out before replacing them with CFLs? Only if you want to wait to begin saving money.

Hope you enjoyed my Gift Ideas – Energy Style! Stimulate the local economy and save money at the same time! How can you beat that?