



EXTENSION COMMUNITY

Home Energy

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Home Energy Efficiency is New Feature on eXtension Web Site

A new home energy Web site provides best-practices information from more than 70 land-grant universities across the nation. It is one of many resource areas within eXtension, an educational initiative of the U.S. Cooperative Extension System. Home energy is the latest addition at www.eXtension.org.

Each U.S. household spends about \$2,000 a year on utility bills. However, a large portion of that energy is wasted. Improving energy use in homes through efficiency practices and products can save money, conserve resources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

“Our goal is to help people make informed decisions, adopt energy-efficient measures and technology, and use energy-efficient products and materials in their homes,” said Shirley Niemeyer, an Extension specialist in housing and the environment at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and one of the leaders of the 90-member group of Extension experts who produced the home energy information.

The home energy resource area offers information focused on existing homes, new homes and alternative energy systems. The site features

- Frequently Asked Questions – Experts have answers for more than 140 frequently asked questions, providing information on topics such as home appliances and building materials.
- Fact Sheets – Information on heating and cooling systems, appliances, building materials, maintenance and landscape provides consumers the latest research and best practices to reduce home energy use.
- News and Upcoming Events – National, statewide, and local events and news related to home energy.
- Ask an Expert – Experts respond to individual questions from the public.

“The availability and interactive capability puts consumers in direct contact with experts,” said Mike Vogel, Extension housing and environment specialist from Montana State University. Vogel noted Web visitors can search the frequently asked questions or ask individual questions to get answers from the university experts.

“We expect high performance from a new car, and we should demand no less from a home,” said Claudette Reichel, extension housing specialist at Louisiana State University. “Today it is possible and practical to have a home that uses half as much energy as a typical existing home with greater comfort and quality, and all with a lower monthly housing cost.” According to Reichel, the articles about home energy on eXtension provide guides to best building practices that work as a system to achieve high energy efficiency. “New resources can help consumers reduce home energy use to work towards economic stability, as well as move the U.S. toward energy independence and protect the environment,” said Reichel.

According to Michael Goldschmidt, Extension housing and environmental design specialist at the University of Missouri, advancements in photovoltaics and wind turbines allow more homeowners to explore the possibility of generating their own electricity. “The alternative energy section of the Web site gives homeowners basic information to make decisions about wind and solar systems and integrating these technologies into their homes.”

Extension housing and environment specialists and educators from across the nation compiled the content via a specially adapted “wiki,” an online system that allows the experts to collectively add and edit information. All content is reviewed and approved by topic editors prior to publication on the Web.

More than 25 resource areas on the eXtension provide objective and research-based information and learning opportunities that help people improve their lives. eXtension is an educational partnership of more than 70 land-grant universities. The eXtension site, www.extension.org, is customized with links to state Cooperative Extension Services.

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