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Energy Conservation Program Saves Big Bucks For Seniors

Posted By: Bruce Leshan ■ 13 hrs ago

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(WUSA) -- Those sky-high gas prices are forcing some seniors in our area to make a difficult choice. Quit driving -- or quit heating or cooling their homes. Which is why a new program from Dominion Virginia Power is making a huge difference.

And it may give you some ideas too.

"I'd do a jig, if I could," says 80-year-old Marguerite Sparks of Arlington. She can scarcely believe the miracle a little insulation has wrought.

Last year, her monthly heating bill was close to \$300. "I had gotten to the point where I couldn't pay it. "

Now it's less than half that. And the work was all free. The retired dancer holds up both fists. Zero. She didn't pay a dime.

A crew from Community Housing Partners is at work now on 76- year-old Vivian Minor's Arlington home. They're insulating the attic, replacing a few windows, and sealing the duct work.

The costs are all covered by the state, the feds, and Dominion Virginia Power. Minor says there is "no, no, no. No way," she could have come up with the \$4,000 to \$5,000 cost of the project.

Energy efficiency experts say these kind of changes make sense for a whole lot of homeowners, even if you have to pay for them yourself. "It's not inconceivable for someone to recoup just over five to six years what they've invested just in energy savings," says Bob Fulton, and energy conservation specialist with Virginia Dominion Power.

One of the most important things you can do to save energy is pretty simple: change your furnace filter according to the directions. You can also set your hot water heater down to 120 degrees. You can wrap it in an insulating blanket, and insulate the hot water pipe.

The point is just to get started.

Experts say about 30% of the energy loss in older homes is from air leakage. If you can seal up leaky windows, walls, and heating registers, you can save big bucks too.

Written by Bruce Leshan



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