

Keeping warm

'Wise energy use' key to renter weatherization

By **LESLIE FARRIS**
Of the Emerald

Is weatherization cost-effective for students who rent apartments and houses?

Yes, says Earl Ritter of the Eugene Water & Electric Board Conservation Center.

"The most practical weatherization for students is wise use of energy, and it doesn't cost a thing," Ritter says.

Most no-cost savings come from conserving heat and energy. The Oregon Department of Energy estimates 50 to 70 cents of each household energy dollar goes to space heating.

"A lot of people make the mistake of leaving their thermostats set at a certain temperature," Ritter says. "You can save a lot by turning it down at night and when you're in school. It may take a little more energy to bring the temperature back up to a comfortable level, but you get a net savings if you turn it down when you don't need it."

He says each degree over 70 degrees adds about 3 percent to the annual heating bill, and each degree below 70 saves about the same. Make sure curtains, furniture and other objects don't block radiators or registers, and keep heating surfaces clean.

More heat may be wasted if the water heater is turned up unnecessarily high, Ritter says. Lowering the heater's thermostat to 140 degrees can save up to \$45 a year. Turn off the electricity to the heater if you're leaving for three days or more.

In the winter, open window drapes during the day to let the sun in and close them at night to keep the heat inside. Also close the fireplace damper when the fire is not in use. An open damper loses as much heat as an open window.

Ritter says "wise use" of kitchen appliances also can save energy.

"If you want to bake a potato in the oven, try to plan your whole meal around that oven," he says. "And make sure your refrigerator doesn't have ice build-up. It causes the motor to run harder."

Ritter advises taking showers instead of baths because showers use about half as much hot water. Shower head restricters, which cut the water flow in half, are offered free at the conservation center.

Also offered free at the center are gaskets for electrical outlets. "You'd be

surprised how much air leaks through plug-ins — an awful lot," Ritter says.

Other energy wasters often neglected by students are dripping faucets and leaking toilets. Sealing a leaky hot-water faucet can prevent 210 gallons of hot water from being wasted yearly, the center estimates.

Air leakage can account for as much as one-third of a household's heating cost. Just a one-eighth inch crack around the front door equals the heat lost through a 4-by-7 inch hole, the center reports.

Weather stripping and caulking are effective and cheap ways to reduce heat loss around windows and doors. How much you spend depends on the method you choose — cartridges, tubes or ropes — and the condition and size of your house. A do-it-yourself job can cost up to \$100.

The Department of Energy says a poorly adjusted oil or gas furnace can waste up to 50 percent of your heating budget. For instance, if the nozzle that sprays oil into the furnace is too large, the furnace will use more oil than necessary to heat your home. A professional inspection and adjustment usually costs about \$30.

Although manufactured storm windows constitute a major expense, there are other ways to insulate windows and save on heat loss. For instance, you can build wooden-frame storm windows with plastic sheeting for less than \$6 for each 3-by-4 foot window.

The simplest, cheapest do-it-yourself storm window consists of stretching the plastic film over the outside of the window and holding it firmly in place with wood lath or other nailing strips. At least one inch of "dead air" space must be between the glass and plastic.

A variation of this method is to staple the plastic film over a single wire strand placed on all four sides of the window. Duct tape is then used to seal the edges of the film to the outside of the window.

EWEB offers free energy audits to determine a home's heat loss and what can be done to prevent it. The audit includes a home energy analysis, technical advice and information about state-sponsored, low-interest weatherization loans.

You can write the Oregon Department of Energy, Labor & Industries Building, Salem, 97310, or call toll-free 1-800-452-7813 for a pamphlet on "Weatherization Incentives for Oregonians."



Photo by Erich Boekelheide

One Eugenean saves energy bucks with a simple sheet of plastic.

City considers mandatory weatherization

By **DAWN GARCIA**
Of the Emerald

Failure to insulate your home by Jan. 1, 1985 could cost you \$500.

As part of its citywide conservation program, the Eugene City Council has proposed a mandatory weatherization law that would set energy-saving standards for single-family to four-plex homes.

The proposed law applies to homes built before July 1, 1974, the date the state instituted insulation standards in the building code.

The penalty for noncompliance would be the same as for any other housing code violation — a maximum of \$500.

The controversial ordinance was brought before the council at the Dec. 22 meeting, but action on the proposal will be delayed until at least Feb. 9 to give the public more time to adjust to the idea, councilors say.

"It makes a lot of good sense to let it filter through the hearts and minds of people out there," explains councilor Mark Lindberg.

Lindberg and several councilors say they support the weatherization idea, but agreed to allow additional public comment in the hope of gaining even stronger support and unanimous council approval.

But some citizens have accused the council of railroad through the weatherization law.

Most of the 13 citizens who testified against the weatherization law at the Dec. 22 meeting said they believe in the value of energy-saving measures but

they object to having those measures made mandatory.

"I think people are disturbed any time any form of government attempts to mandate any part of their lives," says Greg Page, the city's technological coordinator and author of the weatherization ordinance.

"But with the energy shortages forecast for the mid-1980s and rising energy costs, the law is very necessary," he says.

Some opponents of the measure argued that the council is convinced that voluntary programs in other communities — and in Eugene — are inefficient.

"Intervening by local government to a certain extent is necessary," says councilor Gretchen Miller. The people most reluctant to weatherize their homes are renters and landlords who don't pay for the heat for their rentals, she says.

The council has met with various neighborhood groups and members of the business community to answer questions and explain how the law would affect them, Miller says. The council is willing to meet with any interested group, she adds.

If the law goes into effect, all homes will be required to meet certain weatherization requirements, including weatherstripping windows and door frames and insulating attics, floors, heating ducts and water heaters.

Financing for such conservation measures would be available through zero- or low-interest EWEB loans. Other financial incentives would include state and federal tax credits.

The city has included in the plan only weatherization measures that would pay for themselves in less than 10 years.

In certain cases, houses would be exempted from specific energy-saving measures. Exemptions would include houses where structural barriers occur or where faulty wiring could make insulating a fire hazard.

A city appeals process that would take financial hardship and unreasonable weatherization costs into account also would be implemented.

Although there would be a grace period for residents who don't comply with the law, those who continue to refuse to comply after that period would violate the city's housing code. The law would apply to the owners of residences — not tenants — and would not affect the sale of the home in any way as similar laws in other cities do.

A home would be inspected and the law enforced whenever a residence changes electrical service. EWEB officials say they hope to inspect approximately 20,000 homes over an eight-year period.

Page estimates that energy saved through the weatherization program would be substantially more than the cost of purchasing power from new generation sources.

The program is expected to reduce oil and natural gas consumption in Eugene by 750,000 gallons and 1 million therms per year.

"It's terrifically cost-effective in terms of savings on heating bills," Miller says.