

MiSustainable Holland

About this series

The MiSustainable Holland column is a collection of community voices sharing updates about local sustainability initiatives.

This Week's Sustainability Framework Theme:

Smart Energy: We need to use both conservation and efficiency measures to manage our resources to provide access to reliable and cost-effective energy.

Stay warm efficiently with these eco-friendly tips

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With less sunlight and freezing temperatures, West Michigan winters can become very chilly and expensive with energy needs for each household. Here are some eco-friendly ways to reduce your energy bill and keep your house warm in the coming months.

1. Lower your thermostat

By shifting your thermostat settings for each season, your house will be able to conserve energy. During the winter months, the range of 67 to 70 degrees is recommended for when you are active. Turning your thermostat down by 10 or even 15 degrees while you're asleep or away can save up to 10 percent on your heating bills.

2. Adjust your fans

Setting your ceiling fans in a clockwise rotation instead of counterclockwise will help redistribute heat around your living space. Warm air rises and tends to be stuck near the ceiling. The clockwise rotation on a low-speed setting will circulate the warmer air evenly around the perimeter of the room, rather than blow directly down on you.

3. Turn on a humidifier

Indoor air can be very dry and uncomfortable in the winter. Turning on a humidifier in your home will help to moisten the air, make it feel warmer, and allow for better heat conservation. Plants are also great humidifiers as they naturally release moisture into the air and can be a great substitute for a humidifier.

4. Reuse oven heat

If you are cooking or baking, take advantage of the heat after you are done using the oven. Once you turn the oven off, leave the door open to help warm up the kitchen with the residual heat from the oven. Note: Never leave the oven turned on to heat a space.

5. Hang heavy curtains

Choosing to hang heavier curtains in the winter months can help add another layer of protection against the cold air for your windows. Hanging these curtains near your bed at night can also help to keep you warmer at night.

6. Close inside doors

Keeping your internal doors closed can help to retain heat in common spaces. Closing the doors to your bedrooms and bathrooms can help concentrate heat in the more central places like the kitchen and living rooms, which are used more.

7. Rearrange your furniture

Rearranging furniture with the changing seasons can provide comfort while using heat more efficiently. Pull furniture away from the chilly walls and windows, making sure that nothing is blocking the radiators or heating vents. Bookshelves, rugs, and carpet will help to reduce heat loss by placing them around the house, especially near exterior walls.

■ *Maya Klanderma is the sustainability specialist at the ODC Network.*