



The Importance Of Weatherizing Your Home This Winter

Why investing in proper insulation and sealing is a key step in maximizing energy efficiency.

Amirah Zaveri
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For more than 20 years, Pamela Brookstein assumed there were just areas throughout her 115-year-old home that couldn't be comfortable when temperatures dropped. At first she thought her place needed new windows, but eventually she came to the conclusion that it was just old, drafty and couldn't be fixed.

Brookstein isn't alone in her conclusions; each winter, we drag out our dusty space heaters from our closets, invest in soft throws and put on fuzzy socks believing that's the best way to combat the cold. Despite two decades of acceptance, Brookstein decided to schedule a home energy assessment and learned that her home had little to no air sealing and insulation to keep

the heat in.

“The first thing someone should do is have an energy assessment to find out how the home is operating currently - how efficiently it’s keeping conditioned air or heated air inside. By hiring a qualified energy assessor, homeowners can find out where the shortfalls are and get a consultation on how to make the home more efficient,” says Brookstein.

Brookstein is currently the market transformation specialist at [Elevate Energy](#) and leads the agency’s [Value for High Performance Homes](#) initiative, which aims to bring greater awareness to the benefits that energy efficiency upgrades have on market value.

“When homeowners make efficiency improvements to their home, it’s important that those improvements are valued consistently in the marketplace because we know that energy efficient homes cost less to operate, are more comfortable and more frequently have better air quality,” says Brookstein.

As homeowners weigh renovation options, Eli Steinhardt, owner of [Steinhardt Builders in Skokie](#) says the most important and cost-effective upgrades are air sealing and insulating, as these two improvements alone can cut your energy bill by roughly 20 percent. Since hot air rises, air sealing your attic is one of the best ways to keep heat in during cold months. And before you spend thousands of dollars replacing your windows, Steinhardt says to look at adding insulation around doors and window caulking first.

“Find a Building Performance Institute (BPI) certified contractor when air sealing your home to make sure it’s done right. There are limits to how sealed your home can be; if a house is air sealed too tight, there’s not enough movement in the air leading to a lack of ventilation,” says Steinhardt. “Depending on where you live, you can receive a rebate of around \$750 for both services which cuts down the cost to between \$1500 to \$2,000 for an average starter home. Coupled with reduced energy costs each month, the upgrades have around a five-year payback.”

As many of us reach for our thick blankets this winter, Brookstein hopes that we learn from her experience and turn towards the big picture solution that can give us comfort today and big savings for years to come.