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Heating Systems Get Some Love in UM Survey

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Sure, caulking helps, but the big savings is found in improved efficiency systems.

We now know, after a speech on Dec. 15th, that President Obama thinks "insulation is sexy," and that he's a believer in window caulk.

But HVAC contractors know the best way to save on heating bills is to install a high efficiency furnace. (And leaky windows can be handled as a supporting measure.)

It often seems however, that HVAC is often overlooked amid all the talk about saving energy. Thermostat settings and insulation seem to be the focus of most news reports. But hopefully, a new study conducted by the University of Maryland might help focus more attention on HVAC.

[Click here to view the full study. \(http://contractingbusiness.com/news/UMNATURALGASREPORT.PDF\)](http://contractingbusiness.com/news/UMNATURALGASREPORT.PDF)

The Baltimore Sun's Meredith Cohn reports that the study shows that if residents improve their home heating efficiency, the state would benefit economically and environmentally. The report was commissioned by the Maryland Department of the Environment and conducted by the university's Center for Integrative Environmental Research and others. It projects that state assistance in buying energy-efficient natural gas furnaces and water heaters and in upgrading insulation would produce:

- 80,000 new jobs over 10 years
- \$11 billion in economic activity over 10 years
- a 9% reduction in carbon emissions over 10 years
- savings for homeowners of up to \$400 in the first year.

State environmental officials asked for the report to help them decide how to spend expected revenue from its participation in the regional cap-and-trade program (pollution emitters buy permits). In the report, researchers concluded:

An average single-family household could save \$400-\$500 in natural gas bills the first year by investing approximately \$3,000 in a package of cost-effective energy efficiency measures: wall insulation, duct sealing, furnaces, water heaters, and pipe wrap

Spending extra to purchase more energy-efficient natural gas furnaces and water heaters pays for itself in fuel savings; the cost of home improvements are more than offset by energy savings;

State incentives to encourage homeowners to purchase the most energy-efficient furnaces and water heaters and to make recommended home efficiency improvements would have positive economic effects, including the creation of more than 80,000 jobs, especially in the construction field, and nearly \$11 billion in economic activity;

Reducing natural gas consumption would help Maryland meet its 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, cutting residential emissions by more than 10 million tons over the next decade, or about 9%

Home insulation should be avoided or accompanied by energy-efficient ventilation measures in parts of the state (mostly in Western Maryland) with high radon concentrations, where tightly sealing a house may increase effective exposure to the gas. Findings apply to smaller, older Maryland homes; fewer benefits are realized in newer, larger homes.

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