

# HOME HEALTH TIPS: HOW TO AVOID PAYING HIGH UTILITY BILLS THIS WINTER...

By John Conway



## ARE YOU READY FOR A DOUBLE-DIGIT INCREASE IN YOUR UPCOMING HEATING BILLS?

According to the utility company, heating bills in Memphis (and throughout the Mid-South area), could spike by 71 percent this winter – maybe even higher, as a result of Katrina.

The U.S. Energy Information Administration (see [www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov)), recently said, “Dramatic increases in domestic energy costs, assisted by everything from tight world oil markets, to blistering summer heat, to the ravages of Hurricane Katrina, have made for an exasperating summer for many consumers and have set the stage for a potentially expensive winter heating season, beginning a month or two from now.”

How bad will it get? Homeowners can expect: A natural gas increase of 71%; electricity increase of 17%; heating oil increase of 31%; and- an increase in propane of 40%.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO PREPARE NOW

- First and foremost, have your heating system inspected and ‘tuned-up’ by a professional. Heating system tune-ups are not expensive, especially if performed as part of a regular, service maintenance agreement. A heating system tune-up will cut heating costs up to 10% for each heating system you have. If you have not had a tune-up for several years, the savings may be more. And- the sooner you get your heating system tuned-up, the better! The last thing you want to do is wait until the cold weather when all heating & air conditioning companies are backed up during the busy season.
- If necessary, replace your old system! Furnaces that are 10 or more years old are only capable of running at a 70% efficiency rate, at best. This means that with EACH heating bill, your old furnace is wasting money; virtually ‘stealing’ from you each month. With a new, variable-speed furnace, you can enjoy an efficiency of up to 95%, which means you will save a LOT of money. Variable-speed furnaces offer significant operating cost savings and will improve the air quality of your home, through increased air filtration.

## ADDITIONAL ‘HOME WINTERIZATION’ TIPS:

- Check ductwork for leaks.
- Caulk windows and install weather-stripping around doors.
- Check all insulation and make sure it’s adequate.

In summary, we recommend a ‘whole-house’ approach when preparing your home for the winter. What’s appropriate for your home depends on your budget, comfort system and family. For more information, contact a reputable heating and air company, and be sure to check references.

*John Conway is owner of Conway Services Heating & Cooling. Established in 1990 as a family-owned business, the company recently was named “Business Professional of the Year,” by the Tennessee Baptist Children’s Home. For more information, call: 384-3511*



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