

UP THE CHIMNEY



By Kate Duffy- Consumer Affairs Association

Last month we gave information about various government programs available for winterizing homes. This article deals with the same problem: how to keep your home warm in freezing cold (Brr!) weather. It's starting to get chilly already, so start working on your winterization projects, if you haven't begun already.

Some of the projects listed below require more money than many of us have. Unfortunately, at the present time, there are no programs to help out renters with these costs. Some landlords will allow their renters to do some simple weatherization projects and take the cost out of their rent. Make sure you check with the landlord first.

WEATHERIZATION CHECKLIST

- * Clean filters on furnace.
- * Have your furnace system checked before cold weather sets in.
- * Clean your thermostat.
- * Check insulation for settling.
- * If you have central heating system, exposed ductwork to the outside should be wrapped securely with insulation.
- * Make sure the attic is properly vented. Venting removes excess moisture.

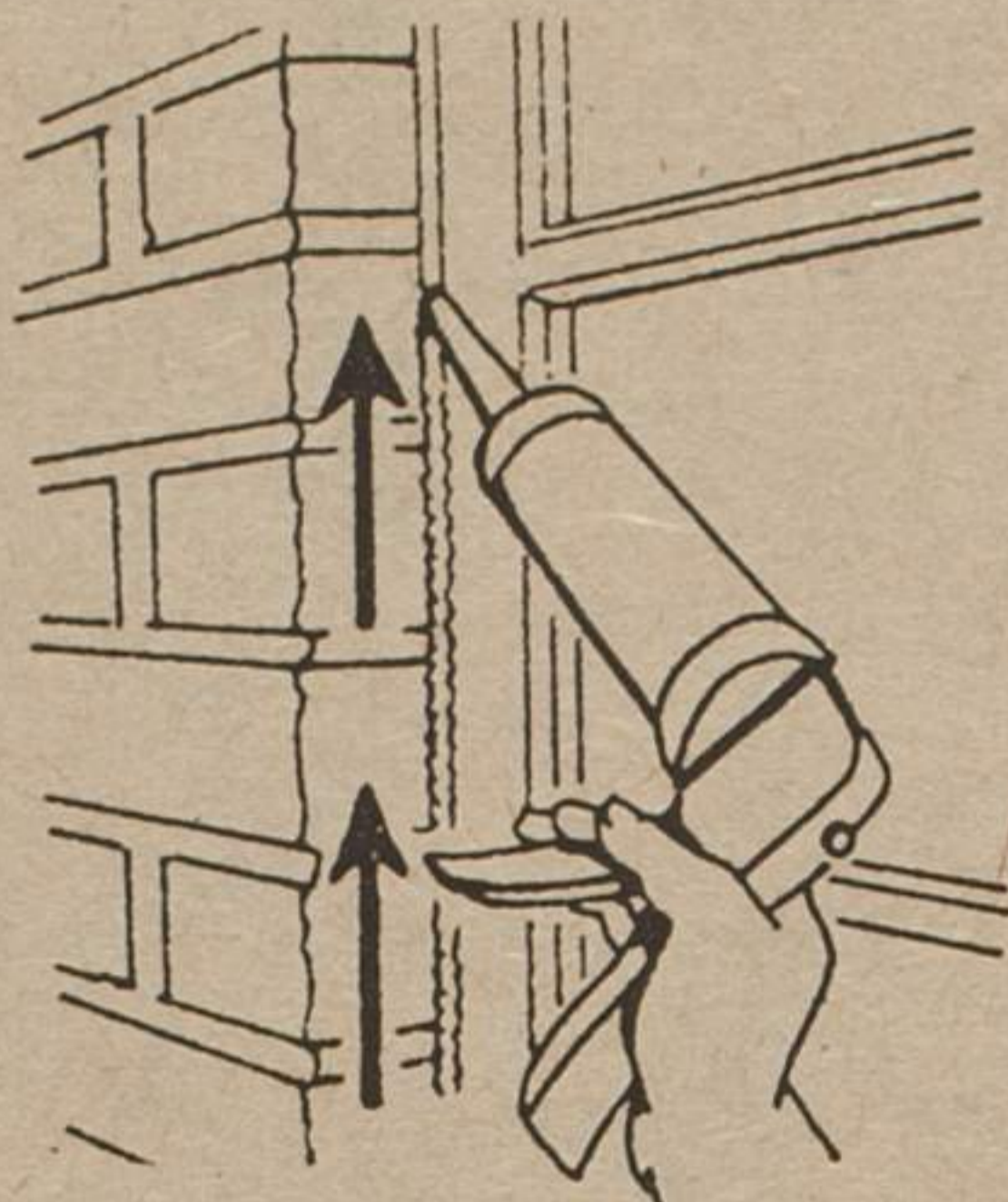
* Check for drafts coming in doors and windows. The northwest side of your house is colder and needs more protection.

* Check the outside of your house for cracks where the wind can blow in.

WINDOWS AND DOORS

You can lose up to 1/3 of your heat through windows. Here is a list of suggestions to help you get some of that heat back.

Run your hand along the windows in your house. Feel a breeze? That's where heat is escaping and cold air is coming in. You can fix this costly problem by placing cloth or newspaper at the top, bottom and center where the window meets the casing. Close the window to make a tight seal. You can also weatherstrip the sides of the window where it slides up and down. If you have cracks around the windows that are stationary, you can caulk them.



The most durable caulk you can buy has a butyl, polyvinyl, latex or silicone base. Most kinds you apply with a caulking gun.

You must use it when the outside temperature is above 50 degrees. If you're low on cash, try using masking tape or clay instead.

Storm windows will always help cut down fuel bills but are too expensive for renters to invest in. So you can make some from heavy duty plastic and furring strips from the lumberyard. This way you don't have to keep buying plastic every winter. Make sure you weatherstrip before you add the windows.

Draperies and shades also reduce fuel costs. Draperies work best when they are "capped" which just means they have a piece of fabric lined with plastic going across the top of the window. This redirects the flow of hot air back into the room. If you fasten the curtains to the sides of the window, cold air will be kept from leaking into the room.

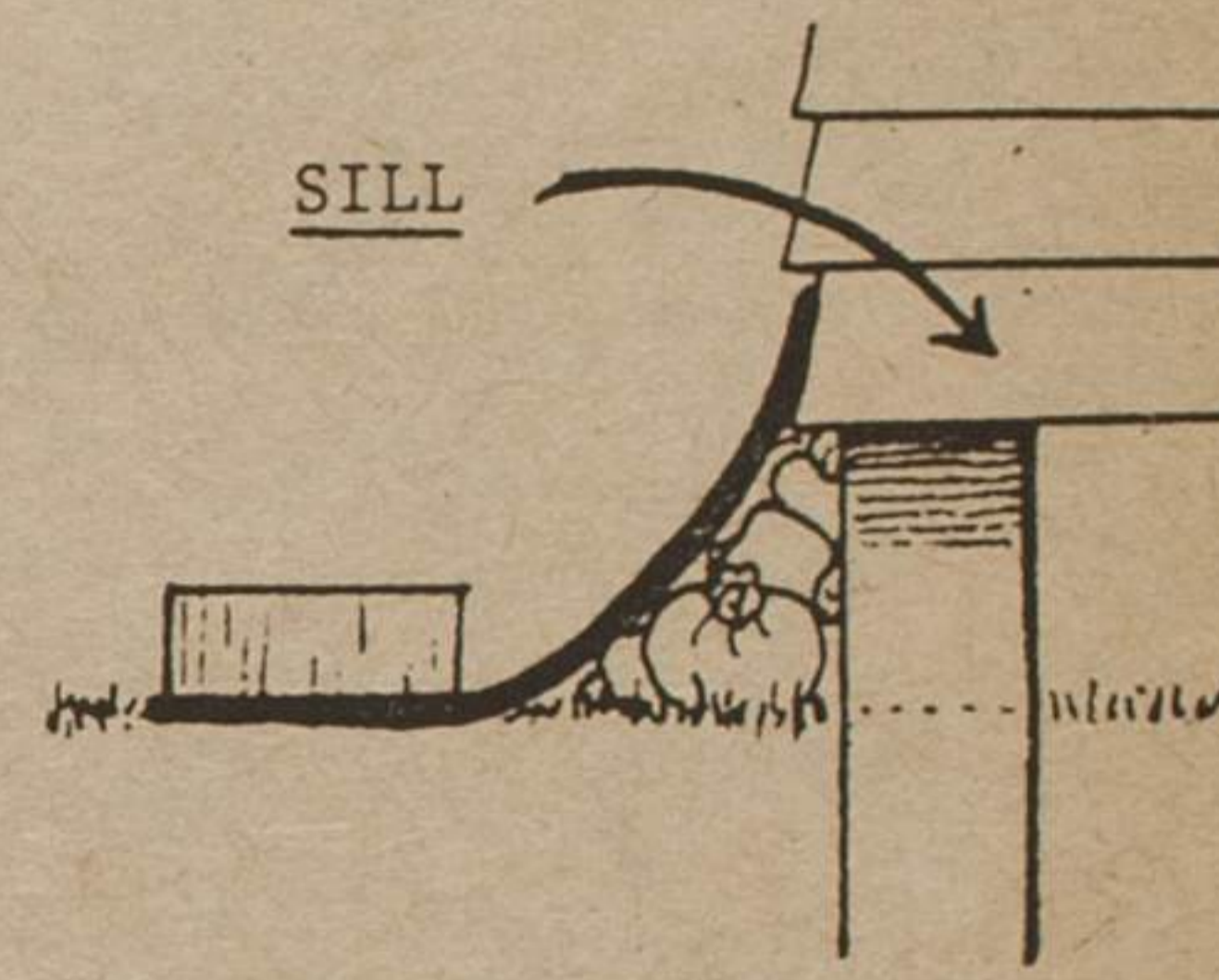
Insulation screens can be made by fitting panels of rigid insulation board to your window. By hinging them and covering them with nice material or paint, they won't detract from your home. At night, just close the screen and you have better protection from the night air and wind. You should also sandwich them between thin panels of gypsum board to make them fireproof.

Doors are harder to weatherstrip than windows. One easy method though, is to put molding at tops and sides if you don't have it and then tack some weatherstripping to the molding. Seal the crack at the floor by putting a throw rug under it. Make sure you

weatherize even unused doors by putting weatherstrip around the edges. You can also hang a plastic shower curtain over a less used door for better protection from the wind. Try to open and close doors very quickly in the winter because you lose a lot of heat when they're opened. Also, make sure both your basement and attic doors are air proof and that your basement windows have plastic on them.

FLOORS AND FOUNDATIONS

Cover your floors with rugs, mats, and more rugs. Having a layer of foam underneath is a good idea but if you don't have the money, try getting old rugs at garage sales and putting newspapers underneath. This will keep the floors warmer too. If your foundation has cracks in it, "bank" it. Fill old sacks with dirt or leaves and stuff these around the edge of the house to fill the space between the sill and the ground. Another way is to nail tar-paper or plastic to the sill and drape it to the ground. Hold it in place with rocks, bricks, or dirt. When snow comes, shovel some over the sacks or tarpaper to fill in any air spaces. It helps keep the heat in.



Trouble you can't afford

FROM PAGE ONE



ally approach the City in a few weeks.

Now, only price increases on the gas itself can be passed on directly to customers. Any major increases for company expenses are studied by a consulting firm, usually Black and Veatch, and then the Commission sets the rates and allowable margin of profit based on the rate studies.

The new method would allow costs for such thing as higher insurance and employee wages to be passed on to customers without a consultant study.

The Gas Co. would benefit from this new plan. Although the Commission would still have to approve increases, adjustments would be quicker and easier to obtain since the company would have to persuade only five "laymen" Commissioners. Because the Commissioners are part-time officials, they would be ill-equipped to study and analyze the Gas Co.'s inevitable

barrage of facts and figures supporting a need for higher prices and profits. The Gas Co. would find it much easier to sell their rate increases to the City.

The potential for abuse would also be greater under the new method. Why would the Gas Co. hold down costs if they could be passed on to customers? Who would make sure the company didn't make any accounting errors which charged customers too much for gas? The error that slighted the Gas Co. wasn't discovered by the company, but by Black & Veatch.

The Gas Co. appears to be pushing for a way to guarantee more profits because its future growth is being threatened.

In June, the Federal Power Commission ordered a ban on any increase in the amount of gas transported to companies by the Cities Service Gas Co., the supplier for Kansas Public Service Co.

If that order is upheld next year, it would ban any new gas hookups by the Gas Co.

Similar FPC orders in other cities have virtually halted growth of gas utility companies, and have greatly curtailed the growth of the cities. Home builders would be forced to build all-electric homes or homes with electrically assisted solar units.

For a gas company that's livelihood depends upon growth to increase profits, such an order would be devastating.

The FPC ruling raises the question of who should own the Gas Co. Should a public utility be privately owned? Should profits be made on a dwindling natural resource vital to survival in a society that's still dependent on non-renewable fuels?

The principal owners of the Gas Co. are now the D.E. Dunne family of Wichita, the Holmes family of Lawrence and the Docking family, including former governor Robert Docking and his brother "Dick" Docking.

In Kansas there are 75 municipally-owned gas companies. Nationally, statistics show that because publicly-owned companies pay no taxes and make no profits, they can sell gas cheaper than private companies.

Last year alone, the Gas Co. paid about \$70,000 in federal, city

and county taxes. Add to that \$200,000 in profits and that's nearly a million dollars that customers paid for costs not essential to supplying people with fuel.



Actions by the Gas Co. in recent weeks are more than just unethical and unfair, they're clearly illegal and call for immediate action by the City Commission. The people of Lawrence are entitled to know how much they're paying for gas and should be given a fair chance to protest rate increases; hardly possible when the Gas Co. informs the public of an increase after the fact. The company should not be able to charge people for a mistake made by the company.

The City Commissioners should pursue the Gas Co. to the limit in court. They should realize the repercussions of adopting the Gas Co.'s proposed new rate-setting method and reject the idea.

Moreover, the Commission should begin now to buy the Gas Co. and begin providing Lawrence residents with gas at the lowest price possible.

Meanwhile, to survive the cold weather that's ahead, it will take more than political heat to warm homes, so PUBLIC NOTICE offers advise on winterization in this issue.

PUBLIC NOTICE

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