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RETRO-FITTING YOUR HOME FOR WINTER IN ADELAIDE

Is your home comfortable in winter ... or do you dread the cold weather?

As a Building Consultant and renowned 'cold frog' I have some suggestions which may improve the performance of your home this winter. The key elements are ... **reducing heat loss, improving insulation, and efficient heating.**

Please consider alternatives to electric heating which may be more expensive and less reliable in the future.

1. Insulate your ceilings, walls and raised floors. The ceiling insulation should be upgraded to a level of R3.0, walls and floors to R1.5 (where possible)
2. Improve access to winter sunlight – cut back foliage which may obstruct the sunlight on the north side of your home (winter sun is lower in the sky). Expose east and west facing windows to the sun - in winter only
3. Reduce heat loss:
 - Add heavy curtains and closed pelmets to the inside of windows
 - Exclude drafts by:
 - Sealing gaps in floors, walls and ceilings
 - Closing gaps around doors and windows
 - Adding door seals to the bottom of doors (or use cloth 'snakes' to block the gap under doors)
 - Adding automatic closers to external doors
 - Fitting shutters on vents, chimneys, exhaust fans
4. Improve home heating by:
 - Checking the efficiency of your existing heater (service it regularly)
 - Selecting a more efficient heater, properly sized to suit the space
 - Considering alternative sources of heat .. eg solar storage systems, heat-shifting ducts in the roof space
 - Seek advice from Energy SA on conserving power in winter
5. Consider separating living areas from the exterior with airlocks. Add doors or curtains to passages and stairwells to zone them from living areas
6. Check your local climate (hills, sea, city, plains) for the direction of prevailing winds in winter so you can exclude or deflect those icy blasts
7. Zone the warmest room (usually on the north side of your home) as a cosy retreat from other areas. Smaller rooms are quicker and cheaper to heat

8. At a personal level you could increase your own level of physical activity in winter to improve your circulation and inner warmth

Longer term options may include:

- Making building alterations to your home to improve the access of winter sun to living areas
- Consider double glazed windows or using high performance glass to reduce heat loss
- Build external breaks against cold winds and driving rain
- Increase thermal mass in rooms which draw warmth from the sun – heat can be retained by the mass in concrete floors, masonry walls, earth berms, water tanks
- Add a greenhouse on the northern side of your home which can draw and store heat that is then vented into the living areas

Reducing heat loss, proper insulation, and efficient heating are the key elements to warming your home. Each building should be assessed individually to maximise the benefits of retro-fitting.

Jack Metcalf, building consultant, can be contacted for building advice on phone **(08) 8261 9049** or refer to website **www.jmetcalf.net**