

## August 2009 EnergyWise<sup>SM</sup> Tip: Heat and Cool Your Home Efficiently

Energy costs continue to rise ... with no end in sight! There is, however, something you can do to counteract this energy sticker shock. For some homes, up to 50 percent of the energy used annually is for heating and cooling. Fortunately, you have an option to minimize this expense.

- **What is a heat pump?** When you drive by a house, you can't tell if the heating/cooling equipment is a heat pump or an air conditioner – they look the same, are connected to the furnace the same, perform the same in the summer in terms of cooling and efficiency; however, heat pumps are able to also heat in the winter and deliver 200-300 percent efficiency.
- **Why does this matter?** Because for 70 percent of the winter the heat pump is able to heat the home by itself. When it gets really cold, the thermostat senses the heat pump needs help, and it cycles the electric or gas furnace with it to heat the home. All this is done automatically – simply set the thermostat to “heat.”
- **Why should you care?** Based on today's electric and fossil fuel costs, with a heat pump an average home can save \$300-\$400 a year in heating costs because the heat pump is so efficient. For a majority of the winter you are heating your home with a system that is 200-300 percent efficient rather than the normal 80-95 percent efficiency of a furnace which burns fossil fuel.
- **Are incentives available?** Check with your local electric provider, there are NEW incentives available for customers who put in a high efficient heat pump. Choose between either a direct cash incentive (\$200-\$400) or 2.5% low interest loan through the Nebraska Energy Office.

There are very few cases where it makes sense from the homeowners' standpoint to install an air conditioner outside rather than a heat pump. They both perform exactly the same function in the summer – but the heat pump provides big savings during the winter.

You owe it to yourself to make an informed decision regarding your home's heating and cooling system because it is one that will be with you for a long while. Contact your electric energy provider to find out about the efficient, modern heat pump. While you're at it, check out the many EnergyWise<sup>SM</sup> programs being offered to help you use electric energy efficiently and save money.