

# HOMESENSE

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It's Time to Get  
Organized  
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Smart and simple ways to enrich your home living

Spring 2009

\$3.00

## MONEY WISE

### Spurring on Energy Efficiency

► and the economy, too

What does a complicated 1,100-page package of legislation mean for your household? In the fine print, there are some true finds.

The Economic Stimulus package voted on by Congress offers a mix of spending incentives and tax cuts in hopes of kick-starting the economy by creating jobs, giving money back to consumers and businesses, and improving the nation's infrastructure. There's also particular attention given to the goal of making the country more energy efficient, with several provisions for taxpayers to claim on their own.

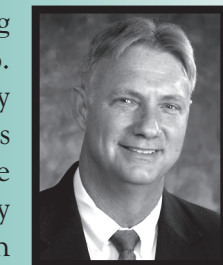
Are you ready to upgrade your home comfort system? This could be the best time ever, seeing as how the new legislation sets aside \$300 million for rebates for purchases of energy-efficient furnaces, windows and doors, or insulation in homes. It extends and expands tax credits through 2010.

**No, you can't have the whole \$300 million!**

But here's what this huge figure may mean for you personally, and we'll be glad to help you figure it out. Basically, you get a **30 percent tax credit up to \$1,500** for the purchase of qualifying high efficiency heat pumps for your existing primary residence which is three times more than the tax credit for 2008 or **you get a full a 30 percent tax credit with no dollar limit** to install a super efficient geothermal heat pump system in your primary, vacation, or rental home.

There's also more help available for low-income households to weatherize their homes – the per-home maximum just increased from \$2,500 to \$6,500.

The legislation is complicated, but there's no need to be confused. Just give us a call and we'll talk with you about how your house can qualify for the energy-efficient tax credits.



### Spring has Sprung

By Brian J. McDonald

Is it Spring already? Hope so. It's been a pretty tough road for lots of folks around the country, probably in your own neighborhood – and maybe even in your own house! So I'm thinking most of us could use a little "renewal."

For months now, we've heard all about how folks have been cutting back on extras. But around here, we look at that a little differently. I mean really. Can you believe that some of the things we use to run our houses – electricity, plumbing, air conditioning – used to be luxuries across this land?

Not anymore. Why, they're as vital to our way of life as... well, let's just say as a text message is to a teenager. Sound familiar? Beeps and buzzes are the symphony of today's family life, letting you know that some really "important" and "urgent" information is right at your fingertips.

Or maybe it's just because most of us, from childhood on, really do like to stay in touch with our friends.

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## Managing Medicines

### ► **free, new online tool helps track your medication**

With the many different medicines out there, looking into your medicine cabinet can be as confusing as rocket science. It's hard to keep track of who in the family is taking what and the dangers of drug reactions, interactions and side effects, and serious drug reactions are increasing, according to a recent analysis reported to the Food and Drug Administration.

Now there's a free online tool to help stay informed about the family's medicines: **MedNotes**. With MedNotes you can:

- **Manage medications** profiles for yourself and your family.
- **Instant access to in-depth medical information**, drug comparisons and interactions, *plus* food, allergy and medical condition interactions.
- **Be notified when new FDA alerts are issued** and when any new medications become available for your existing conditions.
- **Print health records**, physician and emergency contacts, allergies, medications, and conditions.

To create your personalized MedNotes medication profile or for more information, please visit: [www.drugs.com/mednotes](http://www.drugs.com/mednotes).

## SEASONAL SHIFT

### Reducing Air Pollution

#### ► **an inside *and* outside job**

If most people were asked to do a quick word association about air pollution, chances are strong words like "city" and "traffic" would be among the first to come to mind. However, while large cities with heavy traffic are certainly susceptible to air pollution, city dwellers and drivers aren't the lone culprits when it comes to causing air pollution.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), what we do inside our homes, regardless of where we live, can be polluting the air both indoors and outside. To do your part, consider the following tips for reducing air pollution.

- **Recycle.** One of the easiest ways to help reduce air pollution is to participate in your community's recycling program. Recycling helps reduce air pollution by reducing production emissions. Plus, recycling helps to conserve valuable – and expensive (as you've probably noticed on your utility bills!) – energy.
- **Properly dispose of common household items.** Many items around the house can be very harmful to the environment if not disposed of or stored properly. One easy thing you can do to help the environment is to make sure your paints, pesticides and solvents are stored in airtight containers.
- **Inspect your appliances regularly.** Inspecting heating and cooling systems (filters, in particular), can help reduce the emissions of harmful gases into

the air both inside and outside your home. Have a professional (like us!) check your home comfort system in the spring and in the fall. If your system isn't operating efficiently, it could be costing you significant amounts of energy dollars.

- **Look at things in terms of your physical health.** If you or your loved ones are struggling to adjust to a more air-friendly lifestyle, perhaps the context of personal

health can help put things in a better, and more effective, perspective. Exposure to air pollution can aggravate asthma, lead to potential lung damage (including reduced lung function and lifelong respiratory disease), cause coughing or shortness of breath and could result in premature death for people with existing heart or lung diseases.

To learn more about air pollution and how you can play a role in its reduction, visit the EPA Web site at [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov).

To learn more about controlling the air pollution in *your* home, give us a call for a free Indoor Air Quality Inspection.

**...you  
can play a role  
in air pollution  
reduction...**

### "Quotable"

*"Science has never drummed up quite as effective a tranquilizing agent as a sunny spring day."*

*– W. Earl Hall*

## It's Time to Get Organized

Clutter has a funny way of sneaking up on a person. Now is the time to start fresh and take a new approach to organizing. Why? Well, there are valuable benefits...

- ❶ You can save money by knowing just what you have and not buying duplicates unnecessarily.
- ❷ You can get more done in a shorter amount of time.
- ❸ You can feel more control and better about your personal spaces.

How organized you are directly impacts how you feel about your work and yourself, but short of hiring a professional organizer, there's no short cut to clearing the clutter. You can, however, learn to manage it:

### 1. Keep up with the laundry.

Laundry is one area that can become unmanageable if not tackled on a frequent basis. Aim to do a load of laundry every day. Broken down into smaller increments, laundry becomes an easier task.

### 2. Clean up dinner dishes.

Although you may be tired,

cleaning and putting away the dishes means you won't wake up to a sink full of dishes in the morning or be tempted to leave them until the following night.

3. **Sort through mail daily.** Take the time to sort and discard junk mail so that you're not left with a pile of unopened mail. Keep a shredder nearby to discard offers (such as credit cards) that may feature personal information.

### 4. Run errands during the week.

Make a list of errands that you can do during the week on your lunch hour or en route to and from work.

This way you won't have to devote your entire weekend to errands.

### 5. Invest in file products and organizing trays.

These items are great for sorting homework and papers for each member of the family. Don't forget to use file folders on your computer desktop to organize files according to the month, week, or whatever system works best for you.



## DID YOU KNOW?

- ➡ Teflon is the most slippery substance in the world.
- ➡ Oral-B were the first toothbrushes to go to the moon when they were aboard the Apollo 11 mission.
- ➡ By partially filling saucers with vinegar and distributing the saucers around a room, you can eliminate odors.
- ➡ The typical lead pencil can draw a line that is thirty five miles long.
- ➡ Approximately 10.5 gallons of water are used in a dishwasher. Washing the dishes by hand can use up to 20 gallons of water.



## Alertness, Awareness the Best

As technology continues to improve, the home security industry continues to evolve. Many homeowners are securing their homes in ways that were once available only for corporate offices or banks.

But as safe as you can make your home, outside the safety of those four walls, staying safe still rests largely on your shoulders. It's important to know how you can make yourself less likely to become a target:

- **Walk near the curb.** While the criminal lurking around the next corner might seem like a cliché, it's not. By staying closer to the curb, you're making it more difficult for an assailant to catch you off-guard.

- **Do things in pairs.** Avoid situations where you are alone at night. If you must run or walk alone, leave the iPod at home. Wearing headphones can lessen awareness of your surroundings, and give assailants an advantage.

- **Use plastic whenever possible.** While it's important to keep cash on you in case of an emergency, limit that to small bills and make purchases with a credit or debit card whenever possible.

- **Keep keys at the ready.** Have your keys in hand as you approach your vehicle or home. You don't want your mind concentrating on finding them.



## MY WORD (...from page 1)

That, by the way, is how we think of you – not just as customers, but as friends. And the friendship we share matters even more in times like these.

Let me assure you of one thing. We look out for our friends.

When you call us for a tune-up, we try our best to get your system ready so that you won't need

us for awhile. But if you do, we'll be right back out there again to take care of any trouble that comes up.

Sound good? Hope so. Look forward to seeing you in your home soon.

Brian J. McDonald

P.S. We look out for friends of friends too, so please pass along our name – and even this newsletter – to your friends, and we'll give them our best service and value too.

### HomePoints

By replacing old equipment with the **ENERGY STAR** equivalent, heating and cooling bills could be cut by as much as 20%.

## GOOD FOR NOTHING

*That's what many things you get in the mail are worth, but not this...*

Just present this ad with your next repair bill, and we'll give you **\$25 dollars** off. Why?

Because when you have a repair on your heating and air conditioning system, you're already not having a good day. We understand and would like to make things a little easier on your wallet.

Of course, the *best* benefit is that our repair professionals can get your system up and running as soon as possible. **And that's good for a lot.**

## Do You Really Want To Pay MORE for LESS?

**Didn't think so.**

By becoming a member of our Maintenance Agreement program, you'll pay **LESS for MORE**. (That's better, isn't it?)

Membership entitles you to priority service and discounts on repairs, *plus* you'll reap the benefits of extended equipment life and more energy savings. You're one call away from making it happen!

**Outer Banks Heating & Cooling**  
(252) 441-1740

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## Who Knew the Government Would Pay You to Stay Comfortable?

When's the last time the government gave anything away? Still thinking? I thought so. Uncle Sam is in the habit of collecting, not writing checks - at least not to homeowners!

But with the recent Stimulus Package, the government has set aside *\$300 million for tax credits* to homeowners who want to

save energy - up to \$1,500. That's almost like the IRS marking through your tax bill with a red pen that says, "Let us pay you!"

So call **Outer Banks Heating & Cooling** today at **(252) 441-1740** and let us help you get the credit you deserve!



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**HOMESENSE**