



Crawfordsville Electric Light & Power

Home Improvement Projects for an Energy-Efficient 2026

As the old year comes to an end, now is the perfect time to look around your home and find ways to improve energy efficiency, comfort and indoor air quality. With these simple projects, you can improve your indoor space and enjoy lower energy bills in the new year and beyond.

Install low-flow showerheads

Standard showerheads use 2.5 gallons-per-minute or more. WaterSense-labeled models can save water and energy while still providing a comfortable flow.

- Turn off water sources for both hot and cold at the faucet.
- Unscrew your existing showerhead by turning counter-clockwise.
- Clean off the shower arm threads and make sure they are dry.
- Apply Teflon thread-sealing tape, wrapping the tape two or three times around the threads.
- Hand tighten the new showerhead on to the shower arm. Be careful not to over tighten.
- Run the shower and check for leaks. If it leaks, gently tighten with a wrench using a cloth to protect the finish.

Air seal your basement

Air leaking into your basement can make the space feel colder and increase your winter energy bills.

- Check for gaps in the rim joists, where the wall meets the ceiling, as well as plumbing and wiring holes on outside walls.
- Caulk is best for sealing gaps or cracks that are one-quarter inch or smaller.
- Use spray foam insulation to fill gaps up to three inches.
- Fill larger gaps by cutting and stuffing pieces of insulation.

Insulate hot water pipes

Heat loss through unprotected hot water pipes can cost you. Pipe insulation is readily available at your local DIY retailer.

- Starting at the water heater, measure the length of insulation needed to cover accessible pipes.
- Cut the insulation to the lengths needed.
- Place the insulation on the pipe with the seam or opening facing down.
- Tape the insulation every foot or so to secure it to the pipe





Air seal your attic

Leaks in unfinished attics can waste energy, even when adequate insulation is installed.

- Locate all ceiling fans, recessed lighting fixtures and electrical outlets in the ceiling below your attic. Each of these is a potential source of air leakage.
- From the attic, pull back the insulation to find the cutouts and seal them with caulk or expandable foam.
- Check for and seal gaps around plumbing vents, furnace flues and ductwork.
- Seal the attic access with weatherstripping.

Switch to smart outlets

Replace older electric outlets with smart models. Smart outlets automatically shut off power to unused plugged-in devices. And, you can control them from your smartphone or voice assistant.

- Turn off power to the outlet you're working on.
- Remove the outlet trim and disconnect the old outlet.
- Connect the new outlet wires — white to white and black to black. Attach the green wire to the bare ground wire.
- Attach the wired outlet to the box and install the new trim.
- Download the outlet control app and add the outlet to your system.

Contact a qualified electrician if you don't feel comfortable doing the work yourself.

Take a little time now to enjoy a more energy efficient new year!

Warm Up Wisely This Winter: Fireplace Tips and the Case for Electric



Few things feel cozier on a cold winter night than the crackle of a wood-burning fire. But that comforting glow can come with a cost. Up to 90% of the heat produced by a wood-burning fireplace escapes up the chimney. An open fireplace also draws in more air than necessary for burning, further reducing your home's efficiency. Smart use and proper maintenance can help you keep the charm while retaining more of the warmth.

When not in use

Keep your damper closed when there's no fire burning. This simple habit prevents constant heat loss throughout the winter because leaving the damper open is like leaving a window wide open. If you have a fireplace you never use, take it a step further — plug and seal the chimney flue completely. Also, check the seal on your flue damper and make it as snug as possible to eliminate drafts.

During active use

When you do light a fire, open the dampers in the bottom of the firebox if your fireplace has them, or crack open the nearest window about an inch. Close doors leading into the room to contain the space you're heating. You'll also want to lower your thermostat to between 50°F and 55°F to prevent your furnace from competing with the fireplace.

Smart upgrades worth making

Several improvements can transform your fireplace's efficiency. Install tempered glass doors and a heat-air exchange system that blows warmed air back into the room. Replace your grate with one made of C-shaped metal tubes that draw cool room air into the fireplace and circulate warm air back out. Finally, add caulking around the hearth to eliminate any drafts sneaking in around the edges.

Maintenance matters

Schedule annual chimney inspections and cleanings to ensure safe, efficient operation. Check regularly for cracks or deterioration in the firebox, and make sure all seals remain intact throughout the heating season.



Electric: a more efficient alternative

If you're tired of hauling wood and cleaning ashes, an electric fireplace offers a hassle-free alternative that captures the charm of a crackling fire without the work. Electric fireplaces deliver significant advantages:

- Easy installation. No chimney or ventilation is required. Most units need only a standard electrical outlet. Choose from wall-mounted, built-in or freestanding styles to fit your space, or opt for an electric insert that fits into your existing fireplace opening.
- Superior safety. There are no open flames, hot ashes, carbon monoxide or smoke inhalation risks. Cool-touch surfaces make them ideal for homes with children and pets, and automatic shut-off features prevent overheating.
- Minimal maintenance. Since there's no ash, soot, wood logs or chimney sweeping, only an occasional dusting is needed.
- Zone heating efficiency. Heat only the rooms you're using rather than relying solely on central heating, which can reduce your overall energy consumption and costs.
- Instant ambiance. Create a cozy atmosphere with the flick of a switch or the touch of a button.
- Flexible placement. Install them in locations where traditional fireplaces are not possible, including bedrooms, bathrooms and apartments.

In addition, electric fireplace "flames" are a visual effect created using technology like LEDs, mirrors, and water vapor to mimic real flames without burning fuel. These effects can be customized with adjustable colors and movement, and some models even include smoke effects for added realism. Electric fireplaces offer year-round versatility, too. Many models let you operate the flame effects independently of the heat, so you can enjoy the ambiance even during milder weather.

Stay warm, save energy

Whether you choose to optimize your existing wood-burning fireplace or explore the convenience of an electric fireplace, winter comfort doesn't have to mean energy waste. Take time before peak heating season to assess your fireplace situation; your home and your wallet will thank you.

Reflecting on 2025 and Looking Ahead to 2026



Allison Huenemann
CEL&P General Manager

As we reflect on 2025 and look ahead to 2026, CEL&P remains focused on reliability, fiscal responsibility, and service to our community. This year carried special significance as we celebrated 135 years of providing safe, dependable electric service to Crawfordsville—a milestone that honors our legacy while highlighting our continued commitment to progress.

The Memorial Drive Substation project continued on schedule, with nearly \$3 million budgeted in 2025 toward the total \$10.75 million cost and a targeted 2027 completion. Our building improvements progressed with garage door replacements, interior updates, and storage yard updates, ensuring our facilities remain safe and efficient. We also upgraded our large and small vehicle fleet, improving operational reliability and safety.

A highlight of the year was the launch of CEL&P's new logo and refreshed brand identity, symbolizing our modernization and connection to the community we serve.

Looking to 2026, we will continue focusing on infrastructure investment, system reliability, and exceptional customer service. With the dedication of our employees, guidance of our Board, and support of our community, CEL&P will build on 135 years of progress as we deliver safe, reliable, and forward-looking electric service for years to come.