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## Is it worth it to replace my energy-inefficient furnace?

By **Jason Love** For the Camera  
Posted: 01/25/2011 04:02:25 PM MST

**Q:** How do I know when it's time to fix or replace my furnace?

**A:** This question is on many people's minds this time of year. Brad Queen, the Center for Resource Conservation's Energy Director, recently replaced his aging, inefficient model. I asked what his motivations were, "Getting the full tax credit and the Recharge Colorado rebate before it was gone. My old furnace was 23 years old and 80 percent efficient, my new one is 95 percent efficient".

I would recommend looking at three factors that can help you decide if it is time to replace your furnace:

Age and safety

Fuel prices

Incentives

How old is your furnace? The EnergyStar Web site recommends considering replacing your furnace if it is more than 15 years old. At this age, safety could be a concern. An old furnace could be corroded or have cracks resulting in the release of harmful carbon-monoxide gases. You will want to have this tested and examined by a trained contractor. The Center for ReSource Conservation ([www. conservationcenter.org](http://www.conservationcenter.org)) has a list of our business members who are trained contractors. The Boulder Green Building Guild and Recharge Colorado are other excellent resources. In addition to safety concerns, older models are typically far more inefficient than furnaces available today.

Fuel prices in recent years have fluctuated over time, but it is almost a guarantee they are not going down. Take a look at your current utility bill, has your gas bill been on the rise? If you currently have an 80 percent efficient furnace and you replaced it with a 95 percent gas furnace, you can see a potential 15 percent increase in energy efficiency (this is if your air ducts are working properly). You should also consider the electrical efficiency of your new blower motor. A more efficient motor can pay for itself with electricity savings over its life.

Increasing insulation to recommended levels, completing air sealing in your home can reduce the size of the furnace you will need. Adding a programmable thermostat can save you even more money. It is important to look at these before changing your furnace. You can get assistance on these from Boulder County's new EnergySmart service 303-544-1000 or [signup@popboulder.com](mailto:signup@popboulder.com)

The last factor you should consider is incentives. There are some good incentives available first-come first-serve from Xcel Energy, Recharge Colorado, and federal tax credits. You may also be able to get a microloan or use an Energy Star mortgage to finance your furnace replacement.

*Jason Love is Energy Advisor at Center for ReSource Conservation, a non-profit organization that implements programs for the Boulder County community through the Waste (Deconstruction/Re-Use), Energy, and Water Divisions. Visit [conservationcenter.org](http://conservationcenter.org) or call CRC for further information on your home energy use and contractor information 303-999-3820.*

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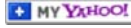
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