

THE 6 DOLLAR BRICK BED WARMER: EVERY NUMBER AND THE BURN RULES

When the power dies, an electric blanket stops making heat. A dense firebrick warmed by a fire stores heat you can bring to bed. Here is the physics, the right brick to buy, the stones you must never heat, and the burn and carbon monoxide rules that matter more than any of it.

WHAT IT IS

Not a rock from your yard. A dense firebrick: a block of fired clay made to handle heat. You warm it by a fire you already have going, wrap it in thick cotton or wool towels, and use it to warm the cold bed and the cold foot end.

The physics in one line: blankets don't make heat, they only slow how fast you lose it. A hot brick is stored heat. It hands that heat back as it cools, and the wrap decides how fast.

The honest limit: nobody has tested a safe overnight recipe for a hot brick in a bed. Low temperature burns are real (page 4). The safest use is to prewarm the bed, then take it out before you sleep.

WHY THE BED MATTERS IN A BLACKOUT

needs power	Even a gas furnace runs its blower, igniter, and controls on electricity.
about 8 hours	In one cold weather model, an older 1950s house fell below 40 F in about 8 hours without heat (RMI). Newer houses last longer, but none hold forever.
below 95 F	Core temperature where hypothermia starts. Older adults can get it indoors, even in a 60 to 65 F home (National Institute on Aging).
246	Deaths Texas tied to the February 2021 winter storm and blackout. Hypothermia caused 158, the top cause. Carbon monoxide caused 19 of the 246.
50 to 200 W	What most electric blankets draw. With no grid and no backup power, the heating stops. It's just a blanket again.

YOUR BED IS THE WARMEST ROOM

90 to 93 F	The "bed climate" sleep researchers measure in the air under your covers when sleep is comfortable.
about 80 W	Body heat from a resting adult (a bit less asleep, around 72 W). Thick enough covers hold it in. That's the heater you already own.
cold sheets	An unused bed in a 50 F room sits near 50 F. Your body has to warm the bedding around you first.

THE WARM FEET STUDY

In 1999, researchers in Basel, Switzerland published "Warm Feet Promote the Rapid Onset of Sleep" in the journal Nature. In 18 healthy young men, the best predictor of how fast they fell asleep was how much warmer their hands and feet got compared with sites closer to the body's center. Cold feet clamp down blood flow to protect your core, which can slow sleep. Warm feet help it along.

THE MATH

Step	Number
Full size dense firebrick (9 by 4.5 by 2.5 inch)	roughly 7 to 8 pounds
Half thick dense split	about 3.6 to 4 pounds, about half the heat
Fired clay or stone vs water, pound for pound	about a fifth as much heat
Stored heat, full size brick, the video's worked example	roughly 70 watt hours
A 100 watt blanket running flat out for 7 hours	700 watt hours, about ten times more
70 watt hours given back over about three and a half hours	about 20 watts on average
20 watts next to your 80 watts of body heat	about a quarter more

A worked estimate, not a measurement. A cooling brick gives off the most heat at the start, then fades. How long yours stays useful depends on the brick, the wrap, and your bed. Time your own on a test night before you count on it.

SHOPPING LIST

Prices checked October 2026. They change by shop and region.

- ☐ **Dense firebrick, half thick split:** about 6 dollars each (a 6 pack ran 34.49 dollars at Amazon and Lowe's). Holds about half the heat of a full brick.
- ☐ **Dense firebrick, full size:** about 11 to 12 dollars each in a 2 pack, around 16 dollars bought singly.
- ☐ **Infrared thermometer:** budget models run about 15 to 30 dollars.
- ☐ Oven mitts or fireplace tongs, and a metal baking sheet
- ☐ Old cotton bath towels, or a scrap of wool blanket
- ☐ Large safety pins, or a pillowcase
- ☐ A carbon monoxide alarm with battery power or battery backup
- ☐ Wool socks and a warm hat

Fireplace shops and masonry suppliers often stock plain firebrick too.

TWO KINDS OF FIREBRICK

	Dense firebrick	Insulating firebrick
Feel	Heavy and hard	About a quarter to a third the weight, soft enough to scratch with a fingernail
Built to	Hold heat	Block heat, store little
For a bed warmer	Buy this one	Skip it

Online listings mix the two. Check the weight: a full size dense brick is roughly 7 to 8 pounds.

UPGRADE: REAL SOAPSTONE

Soapstone is a natural rock, denser than ordinary firebrick, so the same size piece can hold more heat. How much more depends on the stone. Countertop shops sometimes sell scraps.

Not quartz countertop. Engineered quartz has resin in it. Never use it, or granite you can't identify, as a fire heated bed warmer.

THE STONES YOU NEVER HEAT

- River rocks, lake stones, beach stones, and anything pulled out of wet ground.
- Concrete, cinder block, and patio pavers.
- Any stone you can't identify.

WHY THEY CAN BURST

Many stones and concrete hold water in tiny pores and cracks. Heat turns that water to steam, and freely expanding steam takes up roughly 1,600 to 1,700 times the room of the water. If the vapor can't escape fast enough, pressure and uneven heating can crack the stone apart and throw hot chips. That's why the Forest Service warns that rocks heated in a campfire can explode.

KEEP GOOD BRICKS DRY

- Even a dense firebrick soaks up water. One maker lists about 15 percent water absorption.
- Store bricks dry and covered, indoors is easiest.
- A brick that sat in rain or snow must be fully dry before it goes near a fire. If you aren't sure it's dry, don't heat it.
- Cracked or flaking? Retire it from bed duty.

ELECTRIC BLANKET, GRID DOWN

About 110 dollars for a queen. With no backup power it makes no heat, and a battery power station to run one all night costs hundreds if you don't own one.

DENSE FIREBRICK

About 6 dollars for a half thick split. No wires, nothing to leak. It needs a fire you already have, and it needs respect.

CHARGE IT

- 1 Use a fire you're already running safely.** A wood stove or fireplace that vents outside. Set the brick on the hearth facing the fire, and turn it now and then so the faces warm evenly.
- 2 Never bury it in the coals or embers.** That overheats it and can carry burning material with it.
- 3 Stove tops run hot.** A wood stove's normal surface range can be 400 to 600 F (one maker's manual). If the brick sits there, take it off and let it cool well before wrapping.
- 4 Gas range: only by the manual.** Some burners can be lit with a match in an outage. Only do it if your model's manual allows it. Use a dry cast iron skillet, keep the burner low, and stay with it the whole time.
- 5 Grills and camp stoves: outdoors only.** Never inside, never in the garage, even with the door open.
- 6 Move it with heat rated mitts or tongs** on a metal baking sheet. Brush off any ash or embers. Never set it on carpet, a wood floor, or anything plastic.

ABOUT TEMPERATURE

- There is no tested safe temperature for a hot brick in a bed. A firebrick can take far more heat than your skin can.
- An infrared thermometer reads only the surface spot you aim at. The inside can be hotter.
- Heat keeps soaking out into the wrap after you bundle it. A bundle that felt fine at the stove can run hotter later.
- When in doubt, let it cool longer. Warmer than the bed is the whole goal, not hot.

WRAP IT

- 7 Cotton or wool next to the brick:** an old bath towel or a scrap of wool blanket.
- 8 Then several more thick towel layers.** More wrap means slower, gentler heat. The wrap is the dial.
- 9 Never plastic, paper, or synthetic fleece** against the stone.
- 10 Close the bundle** with large safety pins, a tie, or a pillowcase folded shut, so it can't open if it gets pushed around.
- 11 Prewarm the bed:** set the bundle under the covers before bed to take the chill off the sheets.

No wrap makes a hot brick burn proof. Read the burn rules on page 4 before it goes near skin.

CARBON MONOXIDE RULES

- Never use a gas oven or range to heat the room.
- Grills, camp stoves, and generators never run inside the home or garage. Big winter blackouts bring waves of carbon monoxide poisonings from exactly these.
- Burning anything inside? Run a carbon monoxide alarm with batteries or battery backup near where people sleep. An alarm doesn't make banned indoor burning safe.
- Keep the stove or fireplace exhaust path open and the chimney clear.

SIGNS

Headache, dizziness, weakness, upset stomach, vomiting, chest pain, confusion. It can feel like the flu.

- ☐ Alarm sounding, or several people or pets sick together? Get everyone outside into fresh air, then call 911.
- ☐ Don't go back in until responders say it's safe.

LOW TEMPERATURE BURNS

111 F	Held against skin for about 6 hours, this can cause a burn. Harvard burn researchers showed in the 1940s that skin can burn at heat that only feels warm.
104 F	The most the Consumer Product Safety Commission says hot tub water should ever be.

- A bundle that feels pleasant to your palm can still burn a foot that rests on it for hours. A touch test can't clear it for overnight contact.
- **Safest use: prewarm the bed, then take the brick out before you sleep.** Regulators give that rule for hot water bottles (Australia's ACCC) and say to turn heating pads off before sleep (US CPSC). A hot brick deserves the same respect.
- If it stays in the bed, keep it at the foot end, feet near it, never on it. Never lie, sit, or lean on it. Never tuck it under the mattress.
- Wear socks. Repeated heat on the same patch of skin can cause "toasted skin syndrome," a lacy brown rash. Avoid long, repeated contact.

WHO SHOULD SKIP IT

- Babies and toddlers. Never in a bed with a young child.
- Anyone with reduced feeling in the feet, such as diabetic nerve damage. They can't feel a burn starting.
- Anyone who's been drinking, took a sleeping pill, or can't easily move away from heat.

BRICK VS HOT WATER BOTTLE

	Dense brick	Hot water bottle
Heat per pound	About a fourth to a fifth of water	Four to five times a stone's
How hot it goes	Far past boiling, which is exactly why it can burn	Hot water, never boiling; fill no more than about two thirds
Failure mode	Can't leak, but can overheat	Old or damaged bottles can split and scald
Same rule for both	Prewarm, then out of the bed before sleep. Covers cut burn risk but don't remove it.	

KNOW THE LIMITS

- A brick heats you, not the room. It won't keep pipes from freezing or warm the air you breathe.
- Layer up: hat, wool socks, and blankets over everything, but never over your face.
- A second brick lets you swap only while you're awake and tending a fire. Fire safety guidance says put a fireplace fire out before bed.
- A 12 volt car blanket can drain a starting battery and leave the car dead.
- Hypothermia signs (shivering, confusion, slurred speech, drowsiness)? Call 911. A hot brick or hot water bottle is not treatment.
- Room keeps getting colder? Leave early for a warming center or a home with power, before anyone gets sick.

Get the full breakdown, free.

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Sources in the video description. Numbers from Carrier, RMI, the National Institute on Aging, Texas DSHS, CHOICE, ASHRAE, a 2012 sleep thermal review, Nature (1999), the National Academies, Superior Clay, HART, Morgan Thermal Ceramics, Paragon, GTK, Caesarstone, the USDA Forest Service, NIST, VITCAS, the Jotul F400 manual, GE Appliances, the CDC, the USFA, INSPQ, the CPSC, DermNet, NIDDK, the ACCC, NHS, and Hugo Frosch. Retail prices checked October 2026. The 70 watt hour figure is a worked estimate, not a test of any one brick. Cheat sheet for the video "This \$6 Brick Beats a \$100 Electric Blanket When the Power Dies."