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Green Bay Resident Seeks Relief from High Heating Costs

Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® Helps Make Homes More Comfortable and Energy Efficient

GREEN BAY, Wis. (November 12, 2004) — Last winter, two months after Elizabeth Davie moved into her modest Green Bay home, she received an unpleasant surprise – an extremely high heating bill. The rising cost of energy combined with her home’s outdated and poorly constructed heating and insulation systems were driving her bills to outrageous levels.

Like many other Wisconsin residents, Davie sought help through Focus on Energy’s Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program, and now she faces the upcoming winter with a house that is much more comfortable, safe, durable and energy efficient.

For the third straight year, the cost to heat a home is expected to rise. Recent reports estimate the increase to be as high as 11 percent. According to Gregg Newman, Home Performance with ENERGY STAR program manager, this will have a tremendous impact on residents. “Energy costs have risen at more than ten times the rate of other cost of living expenses, putting a strain on people’s budgets,” he said. “Home Performance with ENERGY STAR helps homeowners make their homes more energy efficient, reduce their heating costs and ultimately make their homes safer for their families.”

For Davie, Home Performance with ENERGY STAR was exactly what she needed to remedy her home’s energy problems. “I knew something was wrong,” she said. “The heating costs were just too high for such a small house.” She had no way to identify the problems, nor did she know who to call to repair them, so she went to Focus on Energy’s Web site, focusonenergy.com, and learned about Home Performance with ENERGY STAR.

How the Program Works

Home Performance with ENERGY STAR is an energy efficiency program resulting from a collaboration between the nationally recognized ENERGY STAR program and Focus on Energy, Wisconsin's energy efficiency and renewable energy initiative. The program has created a network of independent home improvement contractors and consultants who have been trained to use the most advanced, state-of-the-art equipment to test homes and identify energy efficiency improvements. A qualified contractor can then implement these improvements, ensuring the work is done to meet ENERGY STAR standards.

During a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR evaluation, consultants and qualified contractors perform a battery of tests, using their expert knowledge and advanced equipment to identify problem areas. The tests include a blower door test, which reveals air leaks that make homes harder to heat, and observing the house with an infra-red camera to determine where heat is escaping. Consultants and qualified contractors evaluate all of the home's systems, including the insulation, heating and cooling, water heater and even the appliances, looking for opportunities to reduce the home's energy costs while making it more comfortable, safe and durable.

The program uses a whole house approach to improving a home's energy efficiency. "Each system in a house affects the others," said Newman. "Looking at a home holistically allows us to recommend cost effective solutions that maximize energy efficiency."

At the completion of an evaluation, homeowners are given a list of recommended solutions that, if implemented, will make the home more efficient. Consultants also provide a list of contractors who can complete the work. Focus on Energy offers Cash-Back Rewards for many of these recommended solutions.

Regional Consultant Network

Doug Meek, a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR consultant, conducted the evaluation of Davie's home. Meek found several ways in which Davie could make her home more efficient. "The 1950s era furnace and air conditioner were old and wasting energy," said Meek, who also recommended adding insulation to the attic, as well as air sealing and insulating a crawl space.

Davie took Meek's suggestions, purchasing a new furnace and air conditioner and adding insulation. The insulation qualified her for Cash-Back Rewards from Focus on Energy. With the winter still approaching, she has already noticed a difference. "The house is much more comfortable," she said. When the first heating bills arrive this winter, her comfort level is sure to rise even more.

About Focus on Energy

Focus on Energy is a public-private partnership offering energy information and services to energy utility customers throughout Wisconsin. The goals of this program are to encourage energy efficiency and use of renewable energy, enhance the environment and ensure the future supply of energy for Wisconsin. Since July 2001, the program has helped Wisconsin's businesses and residents reduce their annual energy consumption by more than 511 million kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity and more than 25 million therms of natural gas.

About ENERGY STAR

ENERGY STAR was introduced by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in 1992 as a voluntary market-based partnership to reduce air pollution through increased energy efficiency. Today, with assistance from the U.S. Department of Energy, the ENERGY STAR program offers businesses and consumers energy efficient solutions to save energy, money and help protect the environment for future generations. More than 8,000 organizations have become ENERGY STAR partners and are committed to improving the energy efficiency of products, homes and businesses.

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