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Six Ways Home Performance with ENERGY STAR® Can Help Homeowners Take Control of Their Energy Use

- Before high energy bills become a distant memory, make a plan right now to save next winter -

MADISON, Wis. (April 16, 2009) — This spring Focus on Energy, Wisconsin’s energy efficiency and renewable energy initiative, wants homeowners to know about the program’s available technical assistance and financial incentives to help them improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Through Focus on Energy’s Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program, homeowners have the opportunity to take control of their energy use — resulting in lower energy bills and more comfortable homes.

“This time of year, people tend to forget the pain of their high winter energy bills,” said Sue Hanson, program manager for Focus on Energy’s Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program. “Even though winter is over, it’s important to remember there are things homeowners can do right now to save them money immediately and throughout the year.”

Taking control over energy use

High energy bills are primarily traced to poorly performing components of a home such as air leaks and insufficient insulation. This is an important reason why homeowners should try to pinpoint the exact source of their high energy bills. With the help of Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, and the program’s partnering consultants and qualified contractors, finding these problems and solutions to these problems is easier than expected.

The Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program offers the following six recommendations to lower energy consumption:

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- 1. Add Insulation.** Insulation is designed to resist heat flow — that is, if it is cold outside, insulation helps keep heat inside the house. In winter, for instance, heat will move toward an attic or unheated attached garage. And during the hot summer months, hot air trapped inside an attic can warm the cooler air in the rooms below. To get the biggest savings, the easiest place to add insulation is in the attic; however, it is important to determine how much and what kind of insulation the home already has.
- 2. Air Sealing.** Air sealing is simply closing holes, cracks and gaps where air can pass into or out of the home. Air conditioners and furnaces run to maintain a comfortable temperature. A home that has air leaks uses more energy and costs more to heat or cool because the systems must work longer to maintain that temperature. Hidden air leaks often add up to the equivalent of an open window. Sealing air leaks will maintain a comfortable temperature throughout the home year-round and will help to lower energy bills.
- 3. Programmable Thermostats.** Programmable thermostats help save money and keep homes comfortable by automatically adjusting temperature settings while the homeowner is asleep or away. When properly used, programmable thermostats can save as much as \$100 per year.
- 4. Replace Outdated Cooling Systems.** The decision to upgrade a home's cooling or heating can be a difficult and expensive one. But with the Efficient Heating & Cooling Program, a sister program of Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, homeowners can qualify for a Cash-Back Reward on the purchase of high efficiency central air conditioners, furnaces and boilers installed by contractors partnering with the program. During the warmer months, it's especially comforting to know ENERGY STAR qualified air conditioners can use up to 50 percent less energy than standard models.
- 5. Ceiling Fans.** Ceiling fans can be used in lieu of air conditioners; however, be sure to turn the fan off when you're not in the room to save energy — fans cool people, not rooms.
- 6. Call Focus on Energy.** While the above tips are important, nothing compares to a personalized, professional opinion. When homeowners call Focus on Energy, they learn how to schedule a home energy evaluation, which will help them find out exactly what energy efficiency improvements their home needs. In addition to technical expertise, the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program offers Cash-Back Rewards or financing options to consumers who improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Improvements made will pay off not only in lower energy bills, but in peace of mind knowing the home is now comfortable and less of a strain on the environment. To schedule an appointment, call (800) 762-7077 or visit focusonenergy.com/getcomfortable.

About Focus on Energy

Focus on Energy works with eligible Wisconsin residents and businesses to install cost effective energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. Focus information, resources and financial incentives help to implement projects that otherwise would not be completed, or to complete projects sooner than scheduled. Its efforts help Wisconsin residents and businesses manage rising energy costs, promote in-state economic development, protect our environment and control the state's growing demand for electricity and natural gas. For more information, call (800) 762-7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.

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About the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program

Home Performance with ENERGY STAR is one of the Focus on Energy Residential Programs. It is designed to provide owners of existing Wisconsin homes a cost effective way to reduce their energy bills and enhance the safety and comfort of their homes. To participate, a homeowner must have a comprehensive home evaluation and work completed by consultants and contractors partnering with the program. To date more than 4,500 whole house projects have been completed under the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program. For information, call (800) 762-7077 or visit focusonenergy.com.

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