

## Frequently Asked Questions: Home Performance with ENERGY STAR®

### *What is Home Performance with ENERGY STAR?*

Home Performance with ENERGY STAR is a network of expert residential building professionals partnering to assist homeowners in creating more comfortable, safe, durable and energy efficient homes.

### *How does Home Performance with ENERGY STAR work?*

- You choose a consultant partnering with the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program and schedule your in-home evaluation prior to any insulation or home improvement work. Consultants are professionals who have been trained by Focus on Energy and they agree to uphold standards set for Home Performance with ENERGY STAR. Participating companies and consultants operate independently, setting their own fees based on circumstances such as distance traveled and complexity of the home.
- The consultant will first speak with you regarding any building concerns and/or planned changes to assist in the direction of the evaluation. He or she then evaluates systems that contribute to your home's performance such as insulation levels, air leakage testing, mechanical equipment, moisture assessment and combustion safety and carbon monoxide testing.
- Your consultant will then provide a objective third-party diagnosis in a written report of recommended solutions.
- You decide which of the consultant's recommendations you wish to complete.
- The consultant will provide a list of qualified contractors in your area who can give you estimates for any improvements needed to your home.
- After the work has been completed, the consultant will perform a post-performance evaluation to verify that the home is operating safely and the improvements made are complete and effective. This follow-up visit is an important part of the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR service and is provided at no additional cost.

### *How much does the Home Performance evaluation cost?*

Typically prices range from \$200 - \$400. Consultant's fees vary depending on the consultant's experience and availability, as well as the location, size and complexity of the home. The fee can be offset if your utility company sponsors the program.

### *How do I find out if my utility is a program sponsor?*

Call 1.800.762.7077.

***How long does the evaluation take?***

Typically the time ranges from 3 to 4 hours.

***Do I need to be home during the evaluation?***

It is preferred that the home owner be present, at least for the first half hour so the consultant can speak with you about your concerns.

***I'm planning to remodel my home. Should I include a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR evaluation in my plans?***

Yes. Any changes made to your home, whether it's simply updating a bathroom or doubling your home's square footage, will affect the way your home performs. The best time to take steps to improve the overall performance of a home is when construction is being planned. A complete Home Performance with ENERGY STAR evaluation will determine steps you can take to make your home more comfortable, safe, durable and energy efficient. Ask your remodeling contractor if they affiliated with the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program. If not, ask them to call 1.800.762.7077 to learn more about the possibilities.

***How will my family and I benefit from having our home evaluated?***

If you have a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR evaluation and implement the recommendations made by the consultant, your home will be more comfortable, safe, durable and energy efficient. Identifying insulation needs and air sealing opportunities will reduce uncomfortable drafts and help keep you comfortable year-round. Testing your water heater and home heating systems will ensure they are operating safely and that potentially deadly carbon monoxide is being properly vented to the outdoors. Getting to the source of excess moisture will help you solve the problem before mold takes hold that can cause health problems for you and your family. An optional computer analysis will estimate the energy savings potential for each energy improvement made, and can help you determine which home improvements are the most cost-effective. Finally, improving the condition of your home will make it a more pleasant place to live. You may also qualify for Cash-Back Rewards for selected improvements.

***What do I need to know before I shop for a furnace?***

Focus on Energy recommends that you follow the following guidelines when shopping for a new furnace or boiler:

- Look for a heating system that has an Annual Fuel Utilization Efficiency (AFUE) rating of 92% or higher. A heating system with an AFUE of 92% converts 92% of the energy contained in the fuel into heat; the higher the efficiency rating the more you save.
- Get a furnace with a "smart motor" or ECM motor so that the furnace fan is also efficient. These units provide ultra-quiet operation and increase comfort and air quality.
- Consider a furnace that has 2 stages of heating or that is modulating. A proper sized furnace reduces heat cycling loss and provides better comfort and efficiency.

- Make sure that the heating contractor does a heat-loss analysis so that your new heating system is the right size for your home. Since older installed heating systems are often too big for the homes they are heating, the size of a new heating system should not be based on the size of the old one. Energy upgrades – such as high performance windows, air sealing and insulation – will also reduce the size of the heating system needed and should be factored in when sizing a new heating system for your home.
- As with all major purchases, shop around for price and determine what services are provided after the heating system is installed.
- Keep in mind that a drafty and under-insulated home will cause high heating bills even if the heating system is new.

### ***What kind of central air conditioner should I buy?***

Focus on Energy recommends that you keep two things in mind when purchasing a central air conditioning unit:

- Choose an air conditioning unit that is properly sized for your home. Ask your contractor to determine the appropriate size.
- Purchase a high SEER (seasonal energy efficiency rating) unit. This rating compares the cooling power of the equipment to its electricity use. The higher the SEER, the more efficient the unit. Buy a unit that has a SEER of 14 (the ENERGY STAR standard) or higher.

### ***What kind of water heater should I buy?***

Focus on Energy recommends that you follow these guidelines when purchasing a water heater:

- Choose a water heater that does not use electricity as a source of energy.
- For a 40 to 50 gallon natural or LP gas water heater, choose one with an Energy Factor (EF) of 0.61 or higher. EF is a measure of a water heater's overall efficiency and is based on the size of the storage tank.
- Power-vented water heaters are safer than atmospherically vented water heaters.

### ***Why is my electric bill so high?***

If your electric bill seems high, it may be that one or more of your electrical appliances – such as your refrigerator, water heater, waterbed heater or even an electric space heater should be replaced or removed. Check out a watt meter (portable energy meter) from your local public library to measure the amount of electricity that an appliance is using. You can then compare its energy use to that of more efficient models.

### ***How can I learn more about Home Performance with ENERGY STAR?***

For more information about Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, including contact information for consultants or qualified contractors in your area, visit [focusonenergy.com](http://focusonenergy.com) or call 1.800.762.7077.