



W I S C O N S I N



ENERGY STAR® HOMES PROGRAMS IN THE NEWS

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Welcome



Seems like every time you turn on the television or the radio, or pick up a newspaper, there is a story about the downturn in the economy, and likely, the downturn in housing sales. Which also means that if you're partnering with Focus on Energy's Home Performance with ENERGY

STAR or Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes Programs, you may view your job as just that much more challenging. The key to turning that challenge into an opportunity is being able to convey the value of what you do and the outcome of the job done to your customer. Oh yeah, and providing excellent customer service along the way.

Just a couple of weeks ago I was reading through the National Association of Home Builder's (NAHB) regularly-published Nation's Building News. One of the articles highlighted just this concept, noting that "satisfied customers are the key to success in a down market." Other keys to success highlighted in this article include:

- Make sure the home buyers have an experience that equals or exceeds their expectations

- Provide an open line of communication between the buyer and the builder to address any concerns the customer may have during the buying process
- Have a soundproof quality assurance department
- Give customers a hard copy of a homeowners' manual upfront in the sales process, not after the sale closes.
- Conduct surveys with every homeowner after closing—at about 30 days and again 11 months after closing

While many of these suggestions on the surface seem to be primarily applicable to builders, I see no reason why most of them could not also pertain to contractors and remodelers. I also firmly believe that having good, solid partnerships is another key to success - whether you're trying to offset the impacts of a "down market" or are trying to strengthen your partnership within the Focus on Energy Single Family Homes Programs.

I invite you to keep reading through this newsletter. Not only will you find plenty of helpful hints, but you'll also read about a couple of great partnering success stories, and meet a new face in the Homes Programs.

Best regards,

Sue Hanson

Single Family Homes Program Manager

New Program Assistant joins Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes



Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes is pleased to welcome **Adrianna Zielinski** to the team as our new Program Assistant. Adrianna comes to us with a strong and diverse background in customer service, having worked in many different industries (auto-body shops, cell-phone circuit boards, and the plumbing division of Kohler Co., to name a few!). Adrianna came to WECC for many reasons. "I've heard

a lot of great things about the company from WECC employees, but my main interest lies in helping to promote energy efficiency and save our resources. It's an important mission, and the reason I decided to join the WECC team," she said. "I hope to learn the ropes quickly so I can be a valuable asset to the company and to all of my consultants and builders." Please find some time to introduce yourself to Adrianna! Her extension is 182.



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Ice Damage—we're not out of the wood(s) yet!

This past winter has been one of the worst on record for ice-damming and subsequent structural damage to homes across Wisconsin. Now that warm weather has arrived and repairs can begin, it is paramount to keep a few things in mind:

- Expect a spike in mold and excess moisture issues, especially in attics and wall cavities where proper drying may not occur and seepage did not manifest a “bulk water event.” Some insulation retains a great deal of moisture. Wood and vapor barriers can do the same. As temperatures increase, molds may bloom.
- Most of the repairs will be underwritten by insurance claims, thus “repair to original conditions” will be the norm. Seldom will there be funds to address root causes.
- Contractors hired to repair these damages have an excellent opportunity to educate their customers and insurance carriers by offering to “future-proof” these homes and build-out the root cause of ice damage by employing building-science principles during repair.

How is this best done? Consultants partnering with Home Performance with ENERGY STAR offer the diagnostic testing to identify root causes and uncover hidden problems. They can:

- Use thermal imaging to find moisture-laden building components.
- Locate and measure attic air leaks, the #1 cause of ice damming.
- Test ventilation systems to assure proper flow and ducting.



- Recommend insulation systems to maximize thermal resistance where it counts.
- Conduct post-tests to assure the job's done right.

Call a consultant BEFORE you start the project—you know the value this service brings. Fold the fee into the overall costs and explain to the homeowner that you are looking out for their long-term interests. They'll thank you for it!

Selling homes in a bear market

Intrepid builders are finding new ways to approach potential customers in slow times. Bart Rynish of Barton Design, a custom-home builder who certifies all his homes through the Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes Program, has begun reaching out to new prospects with monthly seminars. In a strategy Professional Builder magazine calls “guerrilla

marketing,” Bart obtains customer leads from his local realtor and lender, who also present at these seminars. He will also generate leads through personal invitations, word of mouth, and business leads. Other Wisconsin builders have found success with this strategy, drawing 10 to 20 attendees per seminar.

NOW AVAILABLE:

DVDs promoting Home Performance with ENERGY STAR



homeowners. The second video, which is longer and more in-depth, is geared toward helping contractors better understand the insulation and other technical services of

This past fall, the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program created a new demonstration and promotional DVD containing two videos. The first explains the Program, its processes and its benefits to

the program. These DVDs are a great training tool and should prove a powerful sales tool as well.

Both videos are also available on the Focus on Energy Web site. A link to the consumer video can be found at the bottom of the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR main Web page at: focusonenergy.com/existinghomes.

A link to the contractor video can be found at focusonenergy.com/homespartners.

Ally and Consultant Combine Forces Home Performance with ENERGY STAR success story



This success story starts with two small businesses joining forces in a quest to reach more homeowners. Mark Furst of Grading Spaces LLC, a Home Performance with ENERGY STAR partnering consultant, began working with Focus on Energy in 2005. Mark found that one of his more difficult tasks as a consultant was “to be able to recommend someone to do the work I had outlined in my reports.” He goes on to explain, “I had no working relationship with them (trade allies). It’s hard to recommend someone until you know the quality of their work firsthand. Also, when dealing with larger companies, one can feel like somewhat of a small fish in a big pond.” That’s when Mark received a call from Rich Buchli of Cellar to Attic LLC. Rich had met Mark through previous outreach and education events and asked if Mark would test the homes he was going to work on.

And a partnership was born. “I wanted to do something in which I could make a difference in people’s lives and for the environment,” Rich said. “Mark and I met through the Home Performance with ENERGY STAR Program, and we discovered that we each had the same attention to detail. It was a perfect fit! We both know we can count on one another to do a great job, make customers happy, and most of all grow and learn.”

“I think the thing that makes our businesses so compatible is that we are on the same level size-wise as well as philosophically. Because we are both growing from being very small businesses, we are looking at the same opportunities for advertising and exposure, helping each other out to promote the other’s business. If one does well, so does the other. More importantly, we look at our missions in the same way—help homeowners to make the best energy upgrade choices and get the best work done once they do,” Mark said. “We are off to an excellent start and hopefully a great future. When we work together, we can accomplish so much more.”

Home Performance with ENERGY STAR is proud to partner with both Mark Furst and Rich Buchli.

Keep up the great work!

BerHoff Homes LLC builds research model home

In January, BerHoff Homes LLC of Neenah, Wisconsin, published a press release noting they have built the Harmony Home in partnership with Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes, the Department of Energy Building America Program, and the Green Built Home initiative that is intended to be a catalyst for change in the home-building industry.

The 5,501-square-foot prairie-style home with a contemporary flair incorporates advanced framing, reducing the amount of lumber used on the external structure by 43 percent. This decreased framing costs and allowed for more insulation, improving thermal retention. Two-inch foam board used for the external sheathing of the structure eliminates any thermal loss from the wood structure. Additional foam is used beneath the basement and garage concrete floor. Cellulose insulation, made from recycled newspaper, and spray foam were used throughout to maximize insulating values. Heating and cooling is achieved through geothermal technologies and supplemented

by both a wood fireplace on the main level and a pellet stove on the lower level. Water heating is supplemented by a solar hot water system. All sinks, showers, and tubs throughout the home implement a system that recycles the heat from spent hot water instead of letting it just go down the drain. A hot-water loop system is also in place, allowing for only 1.5 cups of lost water before hot water reaches the faucet. The home will serve as a research model for both the Department of Energy Building America and Wisconsin ENERGY STAR Homes Programs. Methods and technologies used in this home are intended to serve as building benchmarks for the year 2020. Additional research papers and studies will continue to be conducted on the home to track its efficiencies.

Please contact BerHoff Homes, LLC at (920) 740-6109 or kwismer@new.rr.com if you would like to arrange for an interview or a private tour of the home.



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Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Should we air seal/insulate the rafter bays or the knee walls in the upstairs of our one-and-a-half story home?

A: Often, it is easier and better to air seal/insulate the rafter bays (roof slope). This can eliminate the need for vents, creates a conditioned (or semi-conditioned) storage area, and improves year-round comfort by reducing stack effect. If heating/ cooling ducts are present in these “side” attics, sealing/insulating the rafter bays can save a lot of energy and lessen air leakage caused by differences in air pressure. When choosing this method, remember to seal and insulate the gable end walls, create a continuous air barrier along the bottom of the rafters, and provide a ventilation space above the insulation.

Q: Which area of the house is the most important to air seal?

A: The attic is the single most important area. Generally speaking, the thermal boundary of the house should be the floor of the attic. There are many places to seal before the insulation goes in. Typical areas include chimney chases, metal flue vents, wiring holes, plumbing penetrations, electrical fixtures (i.e., lights, ceiling fans, bath fans, etc.), top plates (interior and exterior walls), attic hatches, dropped soffits, anyplace changes in ceiling heights occur, ductwork penetrations, and openings over stairways. Properly sealing these areas can greatly reduce the stack effect in any home. And keep in mind, the taller the building, the greater the stack effect.

Upcoming Events

Affordable Comfort Conference (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania)—April 7–10, 2008

New Consultant Core Rater Training (Madison)—April 21–25, 2008

Earth Day—April 22, 2008

Wausau Area Builders Association Home Show (Wausau)—April 26–27, 2008

New Consultant Program Training (Stevens Point)—April 28–May 2, 2008

Going Green Wisconsin Expo (Madison)—May 2–4, 2008

MREA Sustainable Living Fair (Custer)—June 20–22, 2008

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