



**Ken  
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*Owner of Slate  
Belt Energy  
Services*

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## Build a Mercedes

You'll never see a Chevy roll off the assembly line at a Ford plant. You will see a lot of Fords and they will be virtually identical except for the paint. Some people love them and some people don't. If you ordered one and expected something different than you get off of a Ford assembly line you will be disappointed.

The same is true with new homes. Although the cost of a Ford pickup is more now than a new home was a few years ago, the companies building new homes are also just an assembly line. You don't get a Mercedes home off of a Ford home builder. The reason an assembly line is efficient is because everyone has a job to do and completes part of the whole. If they had to call to you every time an option came up while they were building your truck and ask if you wanted undercoating or LED headlights they would never get a truck built. The same is true with a home. They don't even ask about some things that aren't included but the options you have are typically cosmetic and are all decided before a shovel hits the ground. If a diligent contractor sees an opportunity to make something better, the builder will shut them down instantly. Do what you were hired to do. Nothing more. Nothing less. Then punch out and go home. A custom home is different and there are many more opportunities to make them better and more comfortable. Most options still come up in the planning process but if the owner is involved and they are hands-on, they may just end up with a Mercedes level home. If the idea isn't just to squeak by the minimum standards but to make the best possible home within the owner's budget, there are numerous small alterations that can be made which will almost certainly return the cost in energy savings early on in the life of the home. As a contractor who has done both kinds of homes, I prefer the custom home by far over the cookie cutter. Materials are expensive now and nobody wants to spend more on them than necessary but all forms of energy are also expensive and you don't just buy them once. You pay monthly for that and as prices rise to heat and cool a poorly built house it will become a burden well before the mortgage is paid off. Eventually I believe this will be the reason some people stay in their homes and others sell them. Time will tell.

Ken Field is the owner of Slate Belt Energy and Field's Service, Inc. As a certified energy rater and contractor, he is qualified to assess every aspect of energy usage and prescribe solutions to save energy. He can be reached at 610-759-6306 or email [Ken@FieldsService.com](mailto:Ken@FieldsService.com)

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