



Ken Field

Owner of Slate Belt Energy Services

Exclusively in the Blue Valley Times

Past, Present and Future

I remember the projects we were working on 10 years ago. Some were paid for by the stimulus grants that Monroe County received and we did a lot of weatherization work for them. Lots of insulation and some window and door replacement. I hope these jobs have performed as well as they were intended to. Hopefully a lot of energy that would have been wasted has been saved. We also supplied a lot of CFL light bulbs to homeowners as part of that program. I don't think that plan went quite as well as expected though.

My own experience with CFL bulbs shows their life to be much shorter than we were told. Although LED bulbs were not available then, that would have added a lot of value to the jobs we did. A lot has changed in 10 years and but in my opinion, not enough has really changed and not in the right direction.

Incandescent light bulbs which were going to be outlawed are still available and there is not an ounce of tax incentive for homeowners to make their home more energy efficient. The demand for energy audits has dwindled. It seems like the energy retrofit business is becoming a niche industry.

On the positive side, it is now required for a blower door test to be performed on all new homes during construction. This is just the start and the tightness required at this time is not really going to produce a much more energy efficient home than a good contractor would have been building 5 years ago. It should stop the leaky, swiss cheese homes that a lot of inferior builders were cranking out though. If the required leakage rate is eventually lowered we will see homes that are much more comfortable and much easier to heat and cool. Even if no more insulation is required in these homes, they will be vastly different than what we see today. The next step after that is to have heating and air conditioning systems match much more closely the energy requirement of the home.

I just received blueprints for a new home and the HVAC system was already specified on it. I did my own load calculation and found that the systems specified are almost twice as large as what is required. This is not unusual but I will not supply a system that I know is too large and one that will not be efficient so it is not likely that I will be hired for this work.

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

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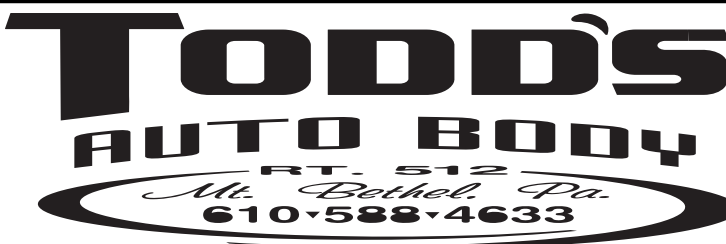
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