



Ken Field

Owner of Slate Belt Energy Services

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Do It Now

Several years ago there were incentives to make homes more efficient. Not only new homes, but existing ones too, and they were mostly in the form of tax credits. Those have since expired and it seems that the will to improve the energy efficiency of homes has also expired. Just because energy cost isn't at a crippling level there is no reason to ignore the fact that most homes are about as energy efficient as a piece of cheesecloth. Some builders paid extra money to be able to hang a brass plaque on the front porch showing that their home was Energy Star rated for efficiency. There were ways to get around the real cost of making a home efficient and still get the plaque but people don't really care about that thing anymore anyway. The real drive should be wanting to build the best house possible for your customer's money and not just skimming the building code to pass. But that kind of pride in one's job is outdated and just another archaic value that doesn't seem to exist today because there is no money in it.

In reality, now is the time to make those improvements because prices don't go down and stay down forever. Energy cost is reasonable now but building supplies and lumber prices are up. Much of energy improvement work is just taking extra time to seal up air leaks and to use the best insulation for the job and the benefit isn't only in lower energy bills. New homes with heat pumps and electric backup can be very uncomfortable and still cost a fortune to heat. My customers think their systems aren't working but in fact they are working as well as they can based on the area they are expected to heat and the way they were installed. If promises could heat a home these people would be toasty warm but it takes proper airflow to each room, some temperature warmer than the human body, and a way to trap some of that heat in the space being heated. Using theoretical numbers for how much air leaks out of a house is the first mistake. Using inefficient heat pumps and electric backup isn't fair to new homeowners but it was up to them to ask questions before they purchased the home. A home inspector won't be able to help them find flaws and know how uncomfortable they will be but an energy auditor will. But after the purchase, it's too late to change much without undoing work that was just done. It's a never ending cycle and a sad one at that.

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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