

HOMESWISE

Real Estate Tips and Advice

Getting a Home Energy Audit

By ANNA CHANG-YEN | Green Shoot Media

If you suspect that your home is leaking out your hard-earned dollars in the form of heating and cooling, a home energy audit is your best bet to find the literal and figurative holes and plug them.

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, having an audit and following up on the auditor's suggestions can save homeowners 5 percent to 30 percent in energy costs.

WHAT TO EXPECT

An auditor will walk through your home room by room, test your heating and cooling equipment and look over your past utility bills. He may even perform a thermographic scan to determine the relative temperature of your home at various points.

The Residential Energy Services Network offers listings of home energy auditors who meet its standards for ethics, objectivity and technical proficiency and agree to its complaint resolution procedures. Visit <http://bit.ly/2l-wqEnL> to find professionals in your area.

AUDIT OR RATING?

RESNET certified professionals offer two different services: audits and ratings. A rating helps you understand how energy efficient your home is when compared to

other homes, as well as a projected idea of your energy costs. An audit is more thorough, "pinpoint(ing) where and how a home is losing energy, which systems are working inefficiently and what cost effective measures can be put in place to rectify the situation," according to RESNET.

A rating costs about \$450, while an audit ranges in price from \$300 to \$800.

An audit can uncover common problems, such as a home getting too hot in summer or too cold in winter, moisture problems, air leakage and out-of-control utility costs, according to RESNET. A rating is commonly ordered by prospective home buyers to gauge a home's energy efficiency.

A rater assigns homes a Home Energy Rating System

(HERS) score, which RESNET calls "an MPG for homes." A lower score is better, indicating a home does a good job of retaining the heated and cooled air produced by your HVAC systems. Raters consider air leaks from both the home's external structure and the HVAC ductwork, the condition of attics, foundations and crawlspaces, the effectiveness of HVAC systems, the



REAL ESTATE 101

Do It Yourself

If you can't afford a home energy audit, the U.S. Department of Energy offers tips to complete an audit yourself. While it won't be as thorough as a professional job, you might uncover some energy problems in your home that can save you money and energy if corrected. Visit <https://energy.gov/energysaver/do-it-yourself-home-energy-audits> for instructions.

efficiency of water heaters, the condition of windows, doors, vents and ductwork, as well as the effectiveness of insulation.

According to RESNET, a typical resale home represents 130 on the HERS Index while a reference home (a standard new home built in 2006) is rated at 100. A home with a HERS score of 70 is 30 percent more energy efficient than a standard new home, and a home with a score of 130 is 30 percent less energy efficient than a standard new home.

A home energy audit goes one step further than a rating, outlining measures homeowners can take to "make the home more comfortable, affordable and energy efficient," according to RESNET.