

This Audit Is A Good Thing

Ask anyone if they want an audit and they will probably tell you, "No." But an energy audit is a good thing, especially since it is free and has the potential to help you save money. Central Florida Electric Cooperative (CFEC) will conduct an energy audit of your home free of charge. All you have to do is call and schedule the audit appointment.

Even knowing the service is free, some people may be reluctant to schedule an audit of their home simply because they do not know what is involved in an audit. However, that is a simple problem to fix. This article is all about what happens in an energy audit.

START WITH A PHONE CALL

"All you need to do is call the cooperative and request an audit," says A.D. Goodman, Member Services Representative. "That's all that's needed to get started. If I am not available at the time or out on an audit, I will call the person back as soon as possible. When we are able to talk, I will explain what I do during the energy inspection so that they'll know ahead of time."

Goodman, who completed training from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association to conduct energy audits, will begin by asking some simple questions about how much energy is being used in the home.

"First, I look at their history of power usage. Then I ask questions like, 'How many people live in the home? Can you estimate how many loads of laundry you do a month? What size refrigerator do you have? From this, I figure a baseload calculation, which tells me the minimum amount of power needed to supply the energy needs of the homes' occupants."

FOCUS ON GREATEST ENERGY USER

Goodman says the baseload calculation involves those things that you do in the home every day or nearly every day.

"At least half of your bill is usually heating and air conditioning, so working to make those things as efficient as possible offers the most savings potential," he says. "Most people don't realize when they go buy an air conditioner that they should get the highest SEER rating they can afford to buy."

The Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER), a calculation that is figured by the manufacturer, reflects the overall system efficiency on a seasonal basis. As of January 2006, all residential air conditioners sold in the United States must have a SEER of at least 13. Energy Star qualified central air conditioners must have



Step 1: Call CFEC to schedule an energy audit.

Step 2: The auditor will talk with you about what is involved in the audit and a time will be agreed upon.

Step 3: The auditor will come to your home and conduct a walk through, looking at all the items that affect the energy efficiency of your home.

Step 4: The auditor will suggest ways the energy efficiency of the home can be improved.

Step 5: The audit is completed and the homeowner implements the energy-saving strategies.

a SEER of at least 14. Window units are exempt from this law and may have SEERs that are below these ratings.

Substantial energy savings can be obtained from more efficient systems. For example, by upgrading from SEER 9 to SEER 13, the power consumption is reduced by 30 percent. With existing units that are still functional, perform regular maintenance to keep the efficiency of the unit as high as possible.

When replacing equipment or specifying new installations, a variety of SEERs are available. For most applications, the minimum or near-minimum SEER units are most cost effective, but the longer the cooling seasons, the higher the electricity costs and the longer the purchasers will own the systems, incrementally higher SEER units are justified.

HEAT PUMP SYSTEMS OFFER EFFICIENCY

While upgrading systems is a good idea, Goodman says you have to do the right upgrading.

"We need people to think about buying products with the higher SEER rating," he says. "Heat pumps are also more efficient than conventional heating units."

Whereas many homes up north have both an air conditioner for cooling and a furnace for heating, our more moderate climate allows for the use of one unit that does both. A heat pump is an energy efficient alternative.

The most common type of heat pump is the air-source heat pump, which transfers heat between your house and the outside air. If you heat with electricity, a heat pump can trim the amount of electricity you use for heating by as much as 30 to 40 percent. High-efficiency heat pumps also dehumidify better than standard central air conditioners, resulting in less energy usage and more cooling comfort in summer months.

Goodman says some folks will use space heaters thinking it is more economical than using their conventional heat.

"If you are using space heaters throughout your home, those things use a lot of electricity and it's going to cost you money," he says. "Some people will use those instead of conventional heat and they'll have six of them going in their house. That isn't being efficient."

DON'T LET SAVINGS FALL THROUGH THE CRACKS

Getting the maximum efficiency for your heating or cooling system is important, but if you don't do anything with the insulation, your savings potential may be flowing right out through the cracks.

"Most people don't realize where they could insulate," Goodman says. "Heat rises, so the best thing you can do is make sure your ceiling or attic is well insulated."

Insulation is figured in R-value. The more insulation you have, the greater the R-value.

"You want insulation to be at least 12 inches thick, which is about an R-30," Goodman says.

"If you have R-19 in your attic, put some more insulation to build it up. If you are not well insulated, you are losing energy and wasting money."

For homes that are built up off the ground, insulating the floor is also necessary to keep heat in and cool air out.

Goodman says with mobile homes, it is not that easy to upgrade the insulation.

"Older mobile homes aren't as well insulated as newer homes, but the technology has gotten a lot better."

Although changing out windows and adding insulation may seem too costly, many of the suggestions Goodman can make for a homeowner are little to no cost energy efficiency solutions.

"Some fixes are as simple as putting darker curtains on the windows in the summer to block out the sun and keep rooms cool, and then putting lighter curtains on the windows in the winter to allow the sun in to warm rooms," he says.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

"It may sound odd for a power company to spend time and resources helping people use less of the product they provide, but that's what we do," Goodman says. "I want to help people and to help them keep their lights on and help them conserve and save power."

Call CFEC to schedule an energy audit and to learn more about the energy savings potential in your home. Call 493-2511 or 800-227-1302 today to schedule an audit.

Other Energy-Saving Ideas:

- Upgrade or install double paned, gas-filled Energy Star windows
- For windows or glass doors that receive direct sunlight, consider installing an awning to shade the area or install a tinted window film that does not obstruct the view, but blocks some of the sun's rays. Window film can be purchased at most home improvement stores.
- If you're not at home during the day, don't keep your house at 78 degrees. Turn it up to 82 or 83 degrees. There's no point in cooling it if you aren't there. When you get home, set it back to where you are comfortable – it doesn't take that long to get there.
- If your hot water heater is outside, put a water heater blanket or jacket on it and also insulate the pipes coming from the water heater unit. It will keep the heating elements from coming on as often.
- Put a timer on the hot water heater and set it for those times you need it.
- On items with a seal or gasket, such as windows or your refrigerator, take a warm, damp cloth and wipe those down once a month to help keep them fresh. Also open and close your windows often to allow those seals to move and not be stuck in the same position.
- Do not store items on top of your refrigerator. For maximum efficiency, air needs to be able to circulate around this appliance. This may extend the life of your refrigerator.
- If you are going to be gone more than three days, turn your water heater off at the breaker. If you are only going to be gone two days, don't turn it off. It would take more energy to heat the water back up than you would save.

Would You Like A Free Energy Audit Of Your Home?

Central Florida Electric Cooperative, Inc. is offering to do a free energy audit of your home.

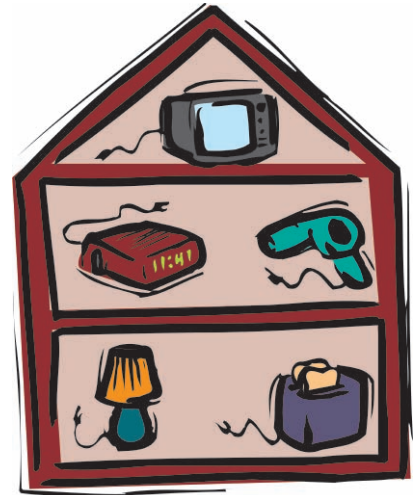
A qualified auditor will conduct a thorough inspection of your home, including the windows and doors, weather stripping and insulation, heating/cooling systems and other home appliances.

The auditor will suggest ways the home could be more energy efficient, thereby pointing out areas of potential savings on your electric bill. Simple, do-it-yourself type fixes may be suggested, as well as no-cost or low-cost practices that save energy.

To schedule an energy audit, call CFEC today at 352-493-2511, or call our toll-free line at 800-227-1302.

Stop wasting energy and paying for it! Schedule an audit today!

Call 352-493-2511 or toll-free at 800-227-1302 to schedule an energy audit.



NOTICE OF PURPA CONSIDERATION AND HEARING PROCESS TO ALL ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS

Issued: March 31, 2009

Central Florida Electric Cooperative, Inc. (Cooperative) hereby gives its members notice regarding the process to be followed in implementing the statutory directives in the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (EISA 2007), which amended the Public Utilities Regulatory Policies Act of 1978 (PURPA). EISA 2007 established new Federal standards under Section 111(d) of PURPA, which each non-regulated electric utility (such as the Cooperative) is required to consider and to "make a determination whether or not it is appropriate to implement such standard[s]" within certain defined time lines based on evidence collected from interested persons after public notice and hearing. A complete public notice issued March 31, 2009 providing a description of the PURPA amendments and the procedures to be followed by the Cooperative in carrying out the mandate of EISA 2007 is available on the Cooperative's Web site at www.cfec.com or can be obtained by calling the Cooperative at (352) 493-2511. The schedule of key events is as follows:

- Notice of Public Hearing and Procedural Schedule – issued March 31, 2009
- Initial Comments – to be submitted on June 1, 2009
- Reply Comments – to be submitted on or before June 30, 2009
- Notice of Intent to Participate in Public Hearing – to be submitted on or before July 14, 2009
- Public Hearing – to be held on August 11, 2009, commencing at 9:00 a.m. at 315 NW 11th Ave., Chiefland, Florida 32626
- Determination – to be rendered on or before November 30, 2009
- Should any change occur in the above schedule, it will be posted on www.cfec.com.