

Do You Need an Energy Audit?

They can help if costs have been going up while your comfort levels plummet.

Professional assessments can help homeowners save as much as 30 percent on your bill.

A qualified auditor will take a deep dive into how and when you use electricity, then offer helpful tips on moving forward. But how do these audits work? And what's your role in making sure they go smoothly?

Here's a deeper dive into energy audits, beginning with tips on finding the best person to do the inspection:

FINDING AN AUDITOR

Audit professionals may or may not advertise their services in your area. If not, contact the energy or weatherization office of your local government, or the local utility company for tips. The U.S. Department of Energy recommends that you ask for several estimates before making a decision on who to use, just as you would with any home-service professional. Check with the Better Business Bureau and their references, too.

BEFORE THEY ARRIVE

Once you've contracted with



rooms see the most usage.

DURING THE VISIT

They'll use a series of special tools like infrared cameras, combustion analyzers, a manometer and perhaps even a blower door. The cameras help detect air leaks, while the analyzer samples for gases in vented appliances and flues, including carbon monoxide. A manometer measures differences in air pressure, something that's helpful when testing things like exhaust devices. A blower door is a large fan that depressurizes the home, also to look for leaks.

WHAT THEY'RE LOOKING FOR

The auditor will zero in on areas around windows, outlets, doors and fixtures where air may be entering the home. They'll check out your fireplace, thermostat, and smoke and carbon-monoxide detectors to make sure everything is in working order. Doors, air registers, framing, insulation and windows will also be examined for in-coming air or condensation. The Department of Energy reports that the average home has enough small leaks to equal the amount of air released by having a medium-sized window open all the time. Auditors will test for air quality and lead paint, too.

REAL ESTATE 101

Insulating the Right Way

Floors above un-air-conditioned garages should be insulated, while also sealing any possible areas of air leakage. This will help with your energy bills. You'll also be lowering the risk of spreading dangerous contaminants into the home like car exhaust, solvents, paint or gardening supplies, the U.S. Department of Energy reports.

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making notes about problem areas. That may include condensation build ups or noticeable drafts. Be ready to dis-

cuss work hours, since that can impact energy usage if you're away, as well as average thermostat settings and which



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HOMEWISSE GLOSSARY

Appraised value: The worth of the property as determined by a professional appraiser. SOURCE: MLS.com

AD SPACE